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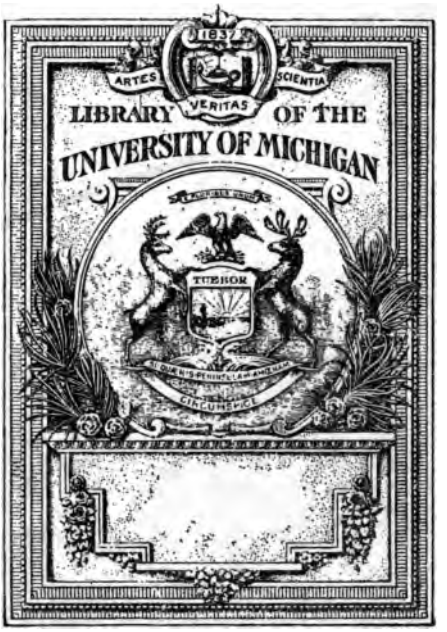
MOUNTED JUSTICE

BY KATHERINE MAYO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MOUNTED JUSTICE

TRUE STORIES OF THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE

MOUNTED JUSTICE

TRUE STORIES OF THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE

BY

KATHERINE MAYO

AUTHOR OF "JUSTICE TO ALL," "THE STANDARD-BEARERS," AND "THAT DAMN Y"

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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FOREWORD

EARLY one Saturday morning in August, 1913, a peculiarly brutal murder was committed at Maaikenshof, the estate of my friend Miss M. Moyca Newell, in Bedford Hills, New York. The victim was Sam Howell, a fine young American, contractor's foreman on a building job. The murderers were four aliens; their motive, to seize the pay-roll that Howell, unarmed, was carrying to the building site.

The four did not get the pay-roll, for the reason that Sam Howell, characteristically, gave his life in its stead. But, although fully identified, they escaped scot free, and walk to-day, as far as that crime is concerned, unpunished and undisturbed.

If an overseeing Olympian, weary of the slackness of mankind, had ordained a tragedy especially to show the futility of all existing provision to cover such an event, the result could not have been more complete. Howell's gallant sacrifice, with the immediate consequences, showed in detail and beyond all question that our hoary sheriff-constable system leaves country districts in time of need without protection worthy of the name. The conditions then uncovered were at once humiliating and intolerable; and so, out of sorrow and shame, was born New York State's movement for a State Police.

The star of this movement shone from Pennsylvania, whose magnificent State Police Force was then in its eighth year of service. As protectors of life,

peace, and property among country folk, it reflected upon Pennsylvania a dignity and honor unparalleled among the Commonwealths. Therefore, any scheme for redeeming the honor of another State must begin with a thorough study of Pennsylvania's achievement.

So conspicuous did the fact become that, as public opinion strengthened in New York, it peremptorily demanded the working facts about Pennsylvania. Therefore, after a careful study of all sources, and after months of research work and investigation on the spot, I wrote *Justice to All*, the history of the Pennsylvania State Police.

The book at once became a sort of textbook, and the late President Roosevelt presented a copy to each of the Senators and Assemblymen of the New York Legislature that, a few weeks later, passed New York's State Police Bill.

In gathering material for *Justice to All*, however, I accumulated, perforce, far more than could be compressed into one volume. In the following year, therefore, I published *The Standard-Bearers*, a collection of absolutely true narratives of the work of Pennsylvania State Police officers. Some of these narratives had previously appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*, while, simultaneously, others were appearing in the *Atlantic* and in the *Outlook*.

From *The Standard-Bearers*, in turn, stories were excluded for lack of space. To these I have now added certain others, with an idea of illustrating still further the infinite variety of the work of the Pennsylvania Force. All three volumes — *Justice to All*,

The Standard-Bearers, and *Mounted Justice* — are now offered as a sort of combined picture, dimly suggesting the thousand-faceted life of a great champion of the people's good.

Of the narratives composing *Mounted Justice*, two, "Between Two Days" and "The Patent-Leather Shoes," have appeared in *The Popular Magazine*. Three, "Quick as God Will Let You," "Under the Yellow Flag," and "The Hand-Picked Job," appeared in the *North American Review*. To the editors of both these magazines thanks are due for their courtesy. The other stories in this book are now for the first time published.

When *Justice to All* went to press, the only State Police Forces in the true sense of the term, on this continent, were the Royal North-West Mounted, the Pennsylvania State Police, and the Texas Rangers. To-day, in addition to those three, we have the State Police Forces of New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, Maryland, West Virginia, Colorado, and Michigan, with strongly developed movements in other Commonwealths. On October 11th last the Commanding Officers of these Forces allied themselves for coöperation, in an Association of State Police Commanders. On February 27, 1922, that body held its first regular meeting — an occasion rich in promise for the weal of the Nation.

Since *Mounted Justice* has gone to press, still another epoch-making step in advance has been taken. On the 18th of March, 1922, the New York State Legislature passed an act "to amend the executive law in relation to the employment of State Police in

towns, villages, and police districts." The bill, introduced in one house by a Democrat, in the other by a Republican, passed practically without opposition, "to take effect immediately." It provides that any town or village or police district may contract with the Superintendent of State Police for a regular assignment of State Police officers, for a period of one year, to handle the police work of that town, village, or district. The town, village, or district shall pay the detail, at a rate computed *pro rata* upon the total cost of pay, maintenance, etc., of the whole department. The detail retain all powers and duties of State Police officers, and remain under the authority and discipline of the Superintendent of State Police. The latter may change the personnel of details whenever he deems it advisable, and may add men to the regular force to fill the places of those detailed.

It needs no elaboration to show the potentiality of this measure in raising and standardizing the peace service of the State while keeping down costs and taxes.

Neither does the measure leave room for doubt as to the esteem in which the people of the State of New York, after four and a half years' trial, hold their own State Police — the New York State Troopers.

KATHERINE MAYO

BEDFORD HILLS
March, 1922

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MOUNTED JUSTICE

TRUE STORIES OF THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE

I

THE COUGHLIN CASE

PART I

THIS story seems obliged to begin with a personal characterization of two living people — of two simple, quiet citizens who, under normal conditions, would never incur public intrusion upon their private lives.

But the intrusion has already been inflicted — and in a shape so cruel, bringing with it so much that is false, that the initial step, now that truth is to be told, must be to define exactly with what manner of folk we deal.

Mr. George H. Coughlin, of Norristown, Pennsylvania, is a young business man of a sort that America likes to claim — well-bred, well-taught, well-plucked, kindly, honorable, reserved, and self-possessed. Mrs. Coughlin, his young wife, is of another good American type — wholesome, sturdy, candid, clear-eyed, cheerful, courageous, and stanchly controlled of nerve by a well-based self-respect. The Coughlins are in modest circumstances — far from rich — and live like their neighbors — like the majority of

reasonably prosperous young couples in suburbs and smaller towns.

Norristown is their business centre and their winter home. But when summer draws on, instead of decamping to distant parts, they follow the example of many of their friends and move only a few miles away into one of a string of cottages on an airy, sightly ridge. There an unpretentious country club gives the several little households their centre of life, and a convenient tram makes good any lacks or defaults as to private cars. The Coughlins' cottage, just big enough for their little household, is the sort of comfortable, inexpensive thing that is built by the thousand in "homestead parks" all over the country.

These latter points become properly noticeable, not from any importance of their own, but because, in the enactment of the story about to be rehearsed, public print so frequently mentioned "the millionaire" and the "palatial home of the great manufacturer" in referring to Mr. Coughlin and to his house on the ridge.

By the first of June, 1920, the Coughlins had already settled into that ridge cottage for the summer. And their three boys, from the eight-year-old eldest to Baby Blakeley, aged thirteen months, were showing the effect of the high, bright air. Little Blakeley, in fact, having been ill with a severe cold, was now so much improved that on the evening of June 1st his parents joined a neighboring card party, feeling assured of his state.

Returning near midnight, the two went together to visit the children's rooms, lingering last and

longest by the baby, to admire his rosy beauty and to rejoice in his returning health. His nursery, which was his alone, opened out of the parents' chamber, and, as his mother left him, she softly closed the door between, lest the draught from the open window beyond his crib prove too strong.

At about two o'clock that night, very suddenly and with that immediate clearness that implies a definite cause — the young mother awakened from a sound, calm sleep.

"What is it?" she thought, listening with arrested breath.

But the house was steeped in stillness — and the great white moonlight flooded the outer silence with peace.

"Why did God call me?"

Somehow, those very words seemed uttered in her brain. Even then she marvelled at them, because such phrases — such thoughts — had never been her vein.

"Why did God call me?"

Awhile she sat upright by her sleeping husband's side, clasping her knees, looking through the eyes of the moon upon a strange, far picture. What a wonderful, beautiful world — two worlds in one. And this secret, hushed enchantment — this stranger — this veiled moon's world — what did it mean? Stillness weighted the very breath she drew. So still — so still — Gradually her senses drowsed. She sank back on her pillow and slept.

Again, in a flash, something recalled her. This time a baby's cry — just a tiny, broken fragment of

a wail — and close thereafter another sound — a sort of light, small creak — a sound that the baby could not make.

Already she had half-risen — but that small creak — Her heart turned cold.

"George!" she spoke clearly. "George! Please see what's wrong with baby."

Thinking, you see, that the voice and words would frighten a burglar away before any one could reach the nursery.

Mr. Coughlin sprang up, and, opening the nursery door, stood in the threshold for an appreciable instant — then called back:

"Do you think nurse could have taken him?"

"You don't mean he's gone!" she cried, and ran to the crib.

The blankets lay as she had left them, with the cover tucked smooth around. Nothing had changed form or place. The under-sheet yet held the impress of the little head — but the baby was not there. So much the moon showed.

They flashed on the lights. Just an empty room. They flew to the other children — to the nurse — in vain. Then down the stairs and out on the lawn. A ladder stood at the nursery window!

Mr. Coughlin plunged into the shrubbery, searching, while the wife rushed to the telephone to call the city police. All night, aided by their neighbors, they hunted the countryside — fruitlessly.

Meantime, the police and the resources of a great detective agency had been called to aid. Next morning the house ran over with strange men,

stranger theories and questions — out of which, like a ghost out of chaos, presently emerged a most hideous thought:

Among them, some one, somehow, evolved the notion that the young mother herself had destroyed her child. And the notion caught.

They found it difficult to believe, you see, that a family without either wealth or enemies — and it was at once obvious that the Coughlins had neither — could be the victims of such a crime. Therefore they fixed upon an idea to them more conceivable.

"She is so calm!" they said. And all that evening two agents sat in the house racking the poor soul with questions, trying to wear her down — to bluff and batter her into confession.

"She is too ealm," they said, having no place in their scheme of things for a woman at once too courageous, too unselfish, too proud, and too well-bred to exhibit personal suffering.

"If Mrs. Coughlin is in on this, hanging is too good for her," remarked Inspector —— in her presence.

The fantasy of the words actually forced from her a smile.

"She certainly acts very peculiarly," they observed, observing the smile, and took a new hold on their vision.

No need to go into the various mare's nests that their theory enabled them to discover — the light-witted relative of a household servant who bore strange testimony as to the child's coming into the world, the missing birth registration, the hunt through the poor woman's girlhood home for the

wherewithal to convict her out of her past. No need to go into the mare's nests, for not one of them produced a single result save those that all had in common:

First: They occupied priceless time with useless gestures.

Second: Through immediate leakage to the press, they brought down upon an innocent family a mass of evil report that must have been almost murderous had not the cup of anxiety and grief brimmed already too full to receive another drop.

Meantime, in the few days directly following the child's disappearance, letters began to pour through the Coughlins' mail. One of the first read thus:

> We got your boy and very nicelooking he is he will get the best of care from my sis. for the next three weeks, but after that, if we don't get what we ask you better forget all about him because he will be put in the dark cell that is ten feet under ground it will smell a little strong because one has been there for over two years and one nine months. . . . We do not kill nobody but we leave them starve in this cell the price is $6000. . . . if you are going to pay just put this in the Norristown [paper] that you are willing to pay $6000 reward for the return of your boy. . . . 10 hours after we get the money a messenger will take your son back to you but remember . . . dont put no cop after us . . . those coppes are no good but trim you of your money they never will find your son you can try them but dont let the three weeks go by.

Other letters from different sources followed fast, carrying suggestion of what to do; advice as to how to do it; stories of babies answering to the description of little Blakeley, seen under suspicious circumstances

here and there; recitals of dreams; above all, demands for ransom with threats of murder in many forms.

For the enormous publicity thrust upon the case, advertising its minutiæ, as the days passed, to the remotest corners of the country, had lavished upon every criminal brain the stimulation and the wherewithal to work.

Out of the tangled mass, the unhappy parents knew no way to separate true from false. Of the multitude professing to hold the child, perhaps all lied. Conversely, if any of the stories really concerned him, it could be but one out of the entire lot. Which one?

The various agents of the various agencies on the job inspired but little hope of help — partly for the reason that their minds seemed occupied with a preconception of Mrs. Coughlin's guilt, partly, as it looked, because of a rivalry tending to mutual frustration rather than to constructive work.

Further, no sooner did any plan near ripeness for execution than, by whatever means, the whole thing was blazoned in print — the whole scheme defeated in advance. And the unfortunate family became the object of what amounted to a real persecution by news-hunters.

Men with cameras kept steady guard at their gate by day. If they attempted escape through some side passage, if they reached a car waiting at a distance, other cars filled with men with notebooks emerged from the dust and stuck to their rear wheels. If, under cover of darkness, they crept away to a neighbor's for a conference behind drawn blinds, their

trail was quickly discovered, and eavesdroppers listened beneath the windows, stealing close to the house.

Even the small hours brought no peace, for then the news-stalkers, mounting the embankment by the gate, shot automobile headlight rays into the bedroom window. Every night of her life, just at two o'clock — the hour that the baby went — the poor mother started awake from some horrible dream into full consciousness that the worst of nightmares might scarcely be worse than the truth, to find the sympathy of the world expressed in the glare of a sharp white searchlight focussed upon her bed.

"If you will only tell those men that they are going to make me lose my mind . . . " once she said.

But for the rest, her whole thought was for her baby — her baby — her baby — to find her little baby that was gone.

She had no time for hysterics — no time, no awareness, no sorrow for herself. She behaved like her husband — like a gentleman, in fact.

So they called her conduct damning, and hunted the harder to show her crime.

Meantime, out of the ever-increasing influx of anonymous letters from persons alleging possession and demanding ransom for the child, one thread began to stand out — the thread first introduced by the letter already quoted.

A second letter, indubitably from the same source, had dictated the place and manner in which the ransom was to be delivered — and the date. To this Mr. Coughlin had replied by a newspaper insertion

asking proof of possession — for a photograph of the child or for a bit of its dress.

Why did you not bring the $6000 where you were told to bring it? [ran the answer, posted in Norristown itself.] My price will now be $12,000 in place of $6000. . . . You ask for proof. I can give you all the proof you want; the room where I got the boy has three door, one Roking chair was in the middle of the floor between the window and the crib. I had to move it a little to get by. A table or a dresser is on the left near the window as I went in, with a woman's workbasket on top . . . the baby's bedcovering was turned down on the side that face a door which lead in to the house. The ladder has got two hook standing up and I put the ladder against the flower box that was on the ground, and if you inquire to some of the men that work on that new building where I took the ladder they also miss an overcoat which I used to wrap the boy in. . . . You cant get the clothing . . . because I destroyed them myself the same night as I got the boy because I was afraid of some mark on it. In regard to a photograph its out of the question. I cant take no photo and I am not going to hire an outsider to do it; not now because his photo is in every paper. It would be to walk right in the trap . . . I only hope that Mr. Blakeley will keep well because if he ever get sick a Doctor never will be allowed to see him. . . . We feed him on milk and eags and a little bread all he want.

The description of the baby's room, all the circumstances detailed, exactly fitted the facts. Further details, given in letters immediately following, showed equal accuracy and no small cleverness. And the writer, following the case as serialized in the press, gave running comment thereon, as:

I am not like those cranks that wrote you from Cleveland or Savanna. They are just trying to Blackmail you,

but you will not get the boy from them, and they cant tell you if the coppers are on the right trail or not because they don't know where the boy is themself.

And again:

If you want to find out who is the real kidnapper of Mr. Blakeley . . . just put an advertise in the evening paper that your boy has been found and you got him home once more and that all the letters you received demanding ransom was from cranks trying to get ransom for a boy they did not have, and then quit to advertise for your boy for a few days and you will see that all those persons will stop writing to you for money thinking that you got your boy back. Everybody will believe it except you, your wife and the one that got the boy — that's me. Now you can . . . have the child back any time you want to but not before I get the money. It used to be $6000 but when I saw in the paper that you was going to deal with a man which did n't had the boy and was asking for $20,000 ransom it made me raise my price to $12,000.

Then, casually,

Say, Mr. George, soon as I saw your wife's photo in the Eve. Bulletin this afternoon I came right home and show it to the boy. He seem to recognize her because he just kept looking at her photo for quite awhile and then smile and put the photo over his face just like as if he was kissing her.

How could father or mother bear that picture? How could they hesitate, or weigh any cost, as against the merest chance of its being true? Remember that scores on scores of other letters, each claiming knowledge, many claiming possession of the boy, all advancing arguments in favor of their claims, poured into the Coughlin house by every mail, while

vocal counterparts besieged them by telephone every hour of the clock.

And the Coughlins were not wealthy folk. They had not the wherewithal to shoot a random bolt, and missing, shoot again.

"Handle the affair yourself," wrote man after man who had undergone, in the abduction of his child, a similar torment.

"Don't deal with the police," urged others who, though strangers, came in honest sympathy to visit the distraught parents; "if you can once convince yourself that any given man has your child, play it straight with him — an even exchange."

And: "Place your money and take your chance — it's the only chance there is."

No one would have supposed that the whole nation afforded so many child-kidnapping histories as now were rehearsed. Even relatives of the long-lost Charlie Ross expressed, in a spirit of helpfulness, the belief that had the family of their missing boy dealt direct with his abductors, he would have been restored to his home.

Meantime, Mr. Coughlin and his wife, separately, in order to spread their efforts and to save priceless time, sometimes accompanied by police, sometimes alone, had already travelled in every direction, into many States, to all sorts and conditions of places, upon visits to mysterious babies that, their informants believed, might be little Blakeley. Inexpressibly nerve-racking had the experience proved. Inexpressibly hideous, utterly blank. Moreover, so rapidly did calls and claims accumulate, it was mechanically

impossible for them, work as they would, to begin to cover the ground. And they faced in despair the fact that they had not means to pay to have it done.

Yet now, through the whirling clouds of doubt, one original potentiality seemed strengthening outline — one potentiality growing, forcing their hand. This was the writer of the letters just quoted.

Particularly because of his accurate description of the baby's room, he haunted the parents' minds. Mr. Coughlin parleyed with him, using the advertising columns of a newspaper, while "the Crank," as he called himself, responded by telephone or by mail. At length, fourteen horrible days after little Blakeley's disappearance, seeing no ray of light or progress anywhere, the unhappy father agreed to accede to his persecutor's demands — to place $12,000 in currency in a certain spot in a manner minutely specified.

This thing, for fear of leakage, he proceeded to do without taking into his confidence any of the various police agents on the job.

The money, "the Crank" decreed, was to be left at a certain hour on the night of June 14th at an exactly indicated place behind the trolley railway station near Swedeland, a steel town close neighbor to Norristown. The money was to be left in a handbag, and with it a blanket in which the baby would be wrapped on his return in the small hours of the same night. And the father was particularly warned not to remain in the vicinity, neither to bring any sort of guard or police into the matter.

All these things Mr. Coughlin did, making, to raise the sum demanded, sacrifices that for any lesser

reason he could but ill afford. He placed $12,000 in currency in the spot directed, parcelled in a handbag, in the manner prescribed. He "played square" to a T, and waited for the answering play that his many advisers had so confidently forecast.

The money duly disappeared. But in vain did he look for the return of the baby. In vain.

Nothing happened.

Except that the various detectives and police people who had been working on the case — some of them doing some very sound investigating — felt naturally nettled when they learned — through the press — that so important a step as the planting of the money had been taken without their knowledge.

"How can we work unless we have your confidence and know how you move? If such a thing was to be done at all, doing it in that way threw away our best chance of catching the kidnappers," they protested.

"I don't care a thing on earth what becomes of the kidnapper," the distracted father retorted — "*we want our boy*. Time is flying. What has been accomplished by *your* means?"

Nothing good, indeed, appeared to have been accomplished by any one. Money, found with difficulty, had been thrown away. Time, vastly more precious than money, had been spent in vain. To the suffering of the parents, terrible at best, had been added, as by a hint from hell, an element of abnormal suspicion and shame. And through it all, as the days, the hours, the moments passed, ran the thought of the precious, tender baby life just so much further

spent, just so much further weakened and abused in the hands of a ruffianly criminal.

Nothing, it seemed, had been accomplished. Nothing at all. And the father's wild bolt, shot into the dark, had proved as profitless as all the rest.

Meantime, the press, still serializing, printed a statement attributed to a local policeman, to the effect that he himself had been in the vicinity of the Swedeland Station late on the night in question; that he had seen there nothing of Mr. Coughlin or of any one else; and that he did not, in fact, believe that the alleged incident of the money-planting had ever happened!

And now, at last, in saturnine comment upon this view came a word from "the Crank" himself: That same local policeman, he affirmed, spoke truth, indeed, when he said he had seen no one about the Swedeland Station. Had it been otherwise — had he, for example, observed one who sat comfortably watching *him* from the top of a heap of coal close by, he would probably have modified his course.

I took him to be somebody you put there to watch me when I was going to get the money [wrote "the Crank" to Mr. Coughlin, righteously stigmatizing as a "crook and a liar" this latest figure on the scene.] I saw you go inside of the station once and twice from your automobile to where you left the bag. . . . He was behind a railroad car right across from the Station, watching you all the time; after you were gone he went over in back of the station and I saw him come out with the bag and blanket . . . so I got away as quickly as I could and went to join my cheuffeur that was waiting.

After their discarding of private detective agencies; after their fruitless independent effort at self-help; after the consequent loss of interest on the part of some of the police powers then at work, the Coughlins almost despaired, knowing no further resource. Almost despaired. For to despair in fact, while yet their boy might remain alive, would be unthinkable. And hope without action meant madness.

Yet — what, what, what to do?

It was just at that point that Mr. Jack Larzolere, the Coughlins' friend and attorney, met Mr. William Coulter of the famous Westmoreland soldier clan — Mr. William Coulter, with a head full of brains and a heart full of red-blooded human sympathy.

"Why, in the name of reason," said Mr. Coulter, "don't those unhappy people cut straight through their trouble and go to the State Police, as they should have done in the first place?"

"State Police?" asked Mr. Larzolere, with an inclusive lift in his accent.

"Great Heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Coulter. "To think there could be a man in Pennsylvania that did n't *know!*"

That very afternoon, June 15th, Mr. Coulter led Mr. Larzolere and Mr. Coughlin — two men pleading as for life itself — into the headquarters of the Department of State Police in Harrisburg.

Now, remember, the case — preëminently one which should have been operated quickly — was over two weeks old. The trail had been crossed and double-crossed uncounted times by all the red herring in a bailiwick. Most of the men and means originally

working on the job had lost heart or for one reason or another had quit entirely. The whole affair was tangled, messed — smudged out in a thick, black, squirming fog. Behind which the facts had probably slid far beyond hope of capture. The affair, in a word, looked bad.

Furthermore, the Pennsylvania State Police Force, as usual, had its hands full ten times over. Day by day the State was heaping upon it, in pure bulk of big detective work — of big police business of the most expert-demanding type — far more than it could handle, for all its sleepless endeavor. Therefore, whether it would or no, it must choose its cases, picking the most important, leaving lesser needs for later time, for other hands — or, for sincerely regretted inaction.

And the Coughlin affair, distressing though it was, might well seem one to be crowded out by the hundred others more inevitably pressing.

Fairly, squarely, it was up to the Superintendent, and no man either would or could question his decision.

Major Adams, tall, spare, lithe as a cat, black-eyed, firm-mouthed, soldierly, leaning forward in his chair by the desk of his private office, listened to the tale in his own peculiar way of listening to things that signify, listened like a flame-devouring oil, silently and with finality assimilating every bit and whiff of it and then the spot behind.

Swiftly, the case took shape in his mind, and beside it, the pros and cons as to the course before him. On the one hand stood the incontestable truth that his

hands were over-full already. On the other, two factors:

First, that "the Crank" was confoundedly clever, clever enough to pique and personally interest even the Major himself—which means no little. "It looks as though he *could n't* be caught, and I don't like to have a man like that around," he ruminated.

Second, that Adams has two little chicks of his own at home.

And it's all very well to say that that should n't make any difference.

It was two hours after midnight — two o'clock of the morning of the 16th of June — when Adams, covered with the dust of rapid travel, walked into the Coughlins' sitting-room.

Mrs. Coughlin came forward to meet him. Her young face was white and drawn. Her hair, that two weeks earlier had been glossy brown, was shot with streaks of grey. But her carriage showed firm and upright, and something that shone around and through her made clear the truth that thought of self had no part or place in her mind — that she dwelt on no suffering, no self-pity, no protest, outrage, or any kind of personal claim or fear.

Walking straight up to the stranger, she looked him fair between the eyes— her own frank blue eyes stripping naked the question:

"Do *you* think I killed my baby?"

Adams returned her look in kind. Then, gently, he took her hand.

"Madam, when nothing else is left to me, then, and not till then, will I think that thing of a mother."

In a climax of suspense the woman had awaited his answer, the answer to her desperate touchstone. Now, suddenly, her whole body seemed to relax.

"Thank God!" she murmured. And after:

"*Now* we shall have light. I knew there must be somewhere intelligence to help us!"

"I shall make all my plans known to you and your husband," said the Major, "and I shall expect from you both absolute openness and coöperation while this case is in my hands."

With Adams had come, that night, one of his troop commanders — Gearheart, Captain of "C" Troop, splendid type of alert young soldier, with a mind as clear and clean as his spirit is high, and trained to a fine edge by intensive secret service experience in The Force. To Gearhart the Major had resolved to commit the conduct of this case.

Together the two officers of the State reviewed the work that had been done — the steps that had been taken. The ground, they found, had been fairly well covered — so well either covered or red-herringed in fact, as to leave but uninviting points of departure for new workers. Still, as the affair yet remained as much of a mystery as it had been on the day of its origin, plainly their work lay ahead of them. And they saw the trend of the initial steps.

These, as they reckoned, comprised two section of activity: first, a mass of "clue"-sifting to be done in many directions; second, the incarceration of Captain Samuel W. Gearhart, hidden and *incognito*, somewhere in Norristown for a wholly indefinite period.

For the execution of the incarceration, Mr. Jack Larzolere himself promptly produced a small back room in the second story of an office building in the centre of the town. That room's one window, facing west, the only direction from which the wind never blew, received the full flare of the hot, hot sun. Its one door must never stand open. Two hard wooden chairs and one cot comprised the furnishings. And one high, limp, weakly sputtering gas-jet — which in any case could be but little used for fear of exciting note — provided the only light by night. Flies found the unscreened window with unfailing acumen and brought the eager mosquito in their trail. In a word, that room was the living picture of a room to stay out of.

And for reasons sufficient to rule, no improvements could be made.

Now just here comes one of the few disadvantages of telling an absolutely true story. Captain Gearhart, relieved by Corporal Snodgrass only when some acute development inexorably ordered his presence elsewhere, stayed inside that wretched little room, night and day alike, watching, working, without a glimpse of life or a breath of outer air, from June 18th to July 31st. Yet what he did, in that same place and time, may not be told. Not one word of it, for reasons that concern the weal of all of us. We may one day need it repeated.

You must just take the assurance, then, that those forty-four days of hot-box confinement were well and wisely spent. Knowing only that from three to seven State Police officers, steadily attached, in various

plain-clothes guises, flew in and out the while, like busy carrier-pigeons, despatched by Gearhart on designs as quick and sensitive as the designs in a turning kaleidoscope.

Meantime, other activities had instantly begun. For a start, "C" Troop, of the State Police, in whose territory Norristown lies, gave their country in a three-mile radius around the Coughlins' house such a scientific fine-tooth-combing as nothing could escape. In this the Norristown Boy Scouts, working under troopers' directions, very considerably aided. But the search, alas, developed no clue.

At the same time began a careful sifting of the mass of letters, signed or anonymous, that daily and hourly continued to inundate the Coughlin mail. Some of them were simply malicious. More bore open fraud on their faces. More still showed patently empty and vain. But of the residue containing some possible shadow of meat, however slight, not one was discarded without investigation. Too much lay at stake.

The number of babies so reported to the Coughlins as having been left "to board" by unknown persons — babies nameless, naked, and without clothes, without any sort of belongings — literally reached into the hundreds. One man, himself obviously honest, related that, he having lately admired a baby in the arms of an unknown fellow-passenger by rail, this latter a woman, had suddenly asked:

"Would you like to have it?"

"Yes," answered the man, naturally thinking the question hypothetical.

Whereupon, "Take it," said she, and, depositing the child in his arms, flashed out of sight in the crowd on the platform.

River-boat stewardesses, station porters, night-watchmen, sent in information of suspicious circumstances observed. Garage men, hotel proprietors, citizens of every class and calling, reported matter whose value personal investigation alone could prove. By June 17th, the day after the State Police took over the case, The Force, all the length and breadth of the State and beyond, was deep in these investigations.

And where, before, the Coughlins themselves had been dragged hither and yon, in body and in mind, by each new scent, now State troopers, trained, keen and silent, searched out the ground in their stead, summoning the parents only when a baby was discovered so closely conforming to Baby Blakeley's description that a parent alone could determine the truth.

The word of the traveller by rail, for example, into whose arms a child had been so unexpectedly dropped, led Corporal Haines over the border of Maryland to a little house in a big black swamp twenty-three miles from anywhere at all. Here, said the traveller, he had deposited his embarrassment, for here lived the only person in all his ken who had expressed a desire for a child.

Corporal Haines, travelling fast, reached the spot after midnight.

Aroused from the depths of sleep, almost in hysterics for pitiful fear of losing her treasure, the woman of the house in the marsh brought the child forth in

her arms. She freely admitted the truth of the traveller's tale. And the baby, a fine, bright boy, was just little Blakeley's size and build.

But — he had red hair!

At the very same small hour, in open country near Darby, Pennsylvania, Captain Price, of The Force, on the word of a huckster concerning a certain gypsy outfit, was routing a troop of astonished Romanies out of the straw. Every child in their possession he examined. Not a mouse could have hidden from the search he made.

"Never a white baby in the bunch," he reported, "though I found the one that bothered the huckster, right enough. Somebody'd made a mistake that day, and washed his face."

Corporal Haines, again, no sooner touched land after his dive into the Maryland marsh than off he shot to discover the truth about a certain negress, reported by her wondering neighbors as the possessor of a white infant. But the woman, as Haines quickly discovered, was a player. The child she had obtained from some institution, for use on the stage. And this, whatever you may think of it on general principles, had little to do with the present case.

Very quietly for a bit these things went forward without the knowledge of the press. Then the fact came out. "State Police Take the Coughlin Case" — in headlines all over the place. Following which, on June 20th, arose from the depths of his silence "the Crank," again demanding $12,000.

If you mean to play fair with me, as I think you did on the first payment . . . be at the B. & O. Railway Station,

24th and Chestnut Streets, Tuesday, June 22nd, and take the 2.44 o'clock train in the afternoon for Baltimore, M.D. Thats the Express [When you see a] white flag with a black cross in the middle on your right side as you go throw [the money in a small] bag out of the window and you will get your boy back before four A.M. Wednesday June 23. Dont worry. Mr. Blakeley is well.

Several times in his earlier approaches, whether by letter or by telephone, "the Crank" had proposed that the ransom be flung to him from bridges, from vehicles, from train windows. But not until now had he required that it be delivered out of the State.

Like all his acts, this move showed shrewdness. He thought he knew that the State Police, for all their swift freedom of county lines, would suffer let and hindrance at State boundaries.

And his shrewdness but sharpened their zeal on his scent.

"We'll coax him along," said the Major to Mr. Coughlin. "We won't try to capture him now, because there is not time to cover the thing properly and we can't take the risk of an unsuccessful effort. Write him a letter. Say that you have not been able to raise the sum; that in any case you do not believe he has the child, and that without more proof you will pay no more money. Put the letter in a bag such as he describes. On June 22d take the train that he indicates and follow his instructions to the dot."

Mr. Coughlin obeyed. And the Pennsylvania State Police made no attempt whatever to seize the person who should pick up the parcel. Troopers sent to the spot shortly afterward determined, how-

ever, that one man, only, had done the errand — a man, by the way, who smoked Fatimas and chewed Spearmint gum.

Said the Major, in Harrisburg, forecasting the future: "This is a good scheme. He has demanded the planting of a parcel in a certain manner. He has been obeyed and has got away with it, unseen. He will pull it off again. We must encourage him."

Now in those days the Major was running two jobs at once — the Pennsylvania State Police, and the Coughlin Case — for the Coughlin Case grew like the upas tree. So Adams spent half each night on the roads, and half the other half in consultations with his officers.

On the night of June 22d the Headquarters car rolled into Norristown just before one o'clock, through a pouring rain. Gearhart himself opened his door to the Superintendent, offering him all the hospitality that the hot-box afforded — a kitchen chair. Together the two men talked till dawn.

Airplanes they discussed. Dirigibles. More means than the lay mind knows how to name. At last they made their choice.

That morning orders went from Headquarters at Harrisburg to the Pennsylvania State Police Training School at Newville, that every recruit instantly be put into intensive training for cross-country running — sustained speed at distances of from one and one half to two miles, over all sorts of ground. Orders went, also, to "A" Troop at Greensburg, that a certain beautiful young bloodhound, called Commissioner, be at once brought east to "C"

Troop in Pottsville, attended by Sergeant John J. Russell, his particular friend and intimate; and that at "C" Troop, Commissioner be extra-trained daily. In either instance, no reasons given.

Further, Major Mair, Deputy Superintendent of The Force, took the first train from Harrisburg to Philadelphia for a little confidential talk with his old chief in the A.E.F., General Atterbury, now returned to his job as Vice President of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

And this latter gentleman, because he knew Major Mair, because he knew Major Adams, and because he knew the Pennsylvania State Police Force, accepted Mair's blanket statement that his coöperation was needed "on a government job" — neither asking nor getting further details.

Vice-President Ewing, of the Reading Railroad, proved equally alacritous and friendly. And when Mair returned to Harrisburg that day, it was with the assurance that, at a moment's notice, for any train on any road running out of Philadelphia, a train, consisting of an engine, two baggage cars, and a combination, would be substituted. And the regular train itself should follow, at an interval to be fixed by the Superintendent of the Pennsylvania State Police Force.

Simultaneously, the newspapers were somehow permitted to contract the idea, first, that Mr. Coughlin, in renewed communication with "the Crank," and now believing that "the Crank" possessed his child, was disposed again to deal with him; and, second, that the Coughlins and the State Police had fallen out, the latter resenting as unfair certain moves of the Coughlins made without their cognizance.

Now, it should constantly be kept in mind that, all this time, a definite possibility remained that the child was alive and in "the Crank's" possession. Granting such to be the case, a growing likelihood existed that, in an access of fear brought on by any unfortunate step, the wretch might suddenly do away with his damning burden. And this likelihood colored with caution every move that The Force made.

Major Adams, from the first, believed that the baby had been smothered to death within a few moments of the instant of its cry on being lifted from its crib in the nursery. Yet no man could be keener than Adams to disprove this, his own belief.

And, meantime, while "the Crank" seemed always the likeliest criminal, who would dare without proof to assume that Baby Blakeley was not a hostage in the hands of one of the endless strings of other blackmailers?

From Trinidad, in the West Indies, they wrote; from Los Angeles; from Georgia,

I am tired of waiting for you to come through and tired of nursing your kid. The sharks can deal with him if you cant deal with me.

I have your baby and if you do not pay what I ask, as I ask it, within ten days from today, I will put out his eyes with Prussic acid.

The boy has turned sickly and cries all the time. If you dont want him enough to pay for him I'll stop his noise.

And so, while the Major perfected the plans laid out in the Norristown hot-box in the small hours of June 23d; while, themselves unknown and invisible, he and Captain Gearhart guided the hand of Mr.

Coughlin in leading "the Crank" into further and further parley; while these things went forward in council, the troopers of the State continued to investigate.

"I don't believe it's possible to get the fellow," ventured one new man in Troop "C."

Gearhart turned on him in a flash:

"Don't figure on vacation, or anything else, till we do get him. Every man in this Troop stays on the job till it is finished and finished right, if it takes a year. And remember this, in our work, always: If ever you doubt you are going to succeed, quit altogether. *You don't belong in the uniform.*"

In "C" Troop, Private Gosselin and Corporals Haines and Snodgrass alone travelled twelve thousand miles, hunting down pretenders. Every Troop had its full share in such work. For every quarter of the Commonwealth, as well as every part of the country, developed its own crop of blackmailers or abnormal seekers after excitement. And these must be hunted singly; caught and handled with the utmost quietude.

"For now," said Adams, "it is no longer a question of the Coughlins and their baby only. It's a question of every parent and every baby in the whole United States. Kidnapping is ready to become an industry. Unless the kidnapper of Blakeley Coughlin is found, convicted, and punished, no child, anywhere, will be safe from abduction. *It is up to us.*"

Then he himself plunged into the field, sometimes disappearing for a week at a clip, while five good Troop Captains, working together as one mind,

steered four hundred steel-eyed men; and while Gearhart sat tight at the main switchboard, a telephone within touch of his lips and a covey of motorcycle men, like a handful of lightning, ready to flash wherever his nod should direct.

Meantime, guided always by the State Police, Mr. Coughlin continued to lure "the Crank" further and further into parley — a parley conducted on the one hand by newspaper insertion, on the other by post, hoping always for the dropping of some hint that might lead to his identification.

And so, what with one pretext and another, the thing moved, until July 29th. On that day the letter-writer flatly asserted that unless he received the ransom by August 2d, the child would never again be seen alive.

"Now," said the State's officers, "our time has come. We must negotiate." And they directed Mr. Coughlin to reply to the threat with a newspaper advertisement of his willingness to deal.

Once more Adams and Gearhart together went over their plan.

"What if the Crank telephones his reply?" said Adams. "It won't give us much time. Two or three hours, maybe. No chance for anything better than a rifle shot from a train window. Poor police work."

"We'll cut the Coughlins' wire," said Gearhart. "Then he'll have to write."

They cut it.

And so, truly enough, on Friday, July 30th, Mr. Coughlin received this letter — and rushed with it to the hot-box:

I tried to get you on the phone today but you must have been out because I could get no answer. . . . This is going to be your last chance to get him back. We go halfway with you — $6000 in cash . . . and the rest in check, on condition that you will not stop payment on those check after you get the boy, because they might get one of us when he go to cash the check but the rest of us will get you.

Use the Reading ferry at Chestnut St., and get the Atlantic City train that leave Camden at 2.10 and sit on your right as you get on the train and keep a good watch out of the window on your right and when you see a white flag throw the bag out of the window. Because it depend on us. If we get the money you get the boy. If we don't, you dont. . . . We are not going to keep him no longer. Too risky. Get the 2.10 P.M. train from Camden on Monday August the 3rd. I garantee that your boy will be home August the 4th before 4 A.M.

If you don't pay I might just as well say goodby for you for your boy.

"Perfect!" whispered Gearhart to his own shadow — and shot the news on to Harrisburg.

Then he arose, stretched himself, and walked out of his six weeks' prison, once more a free man savoring cool air joyfully.

PART II

NEXT morning, the morning of Saturday, July 31st, Major Adams and Captains Gearhart and Price, three highly electric and electrified citizens, boarded a local train on the Reading line for Atlantic City via Camden. Already they had re-discussed their earlier plan, pertaining to another locality and road, and had decided to adapt it to this new development. Now, distributing themselves separately through the

train, they read their papers till Camden Station blocked the light.

Thence, very quietly, as the deliberate local halted on its way, each one of them began to take notes — notes of the nature of the country, of features occurring along the sides of the track. And they studied time-tables with exceeding care. Four times, no less, did they repeat that whole reconnaissance.

Sunday morning they spent in conference together in a Philadelphia hotel. Each man pointed out the spot that he, in "the Crank's" place, would choose to hang out his flag, considering, as the factors, opportunity for escape, probability of interruption, danger of observation by track-repairers, etc.

And the fact that the three argued to three different conclusions but proved the further the difficulty of their task.

Then they charted the route, leaving out of consideration all settlements and stretches of open country, dealing only with tracts of woodland or of brush. And they divided the territory thus remaining into zones. Eighteen zones, sometimes continuous, sometimes not, varying from seven eighths of a mile to five miles in length.

Said Adams, his pencil rapping the map:

"If I were our friend the Crank, I'd pick Zone 13, this five-mile stretch from Ellwood to Egg Harbor. And here are some of the reasons why:

"Zone 13 gives a four-mile tangent of straight-away view up and down the track. It also gives excellent cover from which to observe that view. He's got to have such a place. Then, the track re-

pair is finished here. He'll see no labor-gangs around. And he has a long walk to get out again, which makes his trail less open to checking. Zone 13 is my guess."

Said Price: "I don't agree with you, sir. Now, if I were the Crank . . . " and then proceeded to excellent reasoning in support of another point of view.

"We can take no risks on any ground so logical," said Gearhart — "neither on this little bit down here." And he began on the strategy of still a third sector.

Which brought them, in the end, to reckoning the number of men necessary to the whole job.

Seventy had been their figure after the first reconnaissance of the road. Then eighty-five, then ninety-two. Now Adams exclaimed:

"Fifty-eight miles, by patches, to cover! It looks almost impossible. Therefore we'll make it a certainty. Gentlemen, a hundred and ten men. Now we're off."

Fifteen minutes later he had accomplished his next move — found a certain one-time Trooper of The Force, later infantry captain in France, now a "sane" and prosperous Philadelphia merchant. Adams and "Billy" Morgan, in the earliest days of The Force, had been comrades in the hard-bitten ranks. When Adams was Captain of "A" Troop, Billy Morgan, as Sergeant, had been a right-hand man. Billy Morgan, now, had left his soldier days behind. Yet, where Billy Morgan stood, his old friend knew, there stood a man a man could tie to.

"I want a quiet, unnoticeable place, here in town, to rendezvous a detail," said Adams to Billy Morgan, prosperous business man.

The erstwhile Sergeant gazed up at his old commander with hungry, hungry eyes. All he said was:

"Would our Veterans of Foreign Wars hall do, sir? Over on Arch Street?"

"Right," said Adams, "the very thing. We'll use it to-night."

"Very well, sir," said the prosperous business man, wishing his prosperity in Hades.

So, a bit before noon on Sunday the 1st of August, Troops B, C, and E of the Pennsylvania State Police, these being the easternmost and the central Troops, received orders to despatch to the tryst their specific allotments.

"Plain clothes. And men will not wear their best, as there may be occasion to go into woods, somewhere."

But no other indication did they get as to the nature and purpose of their detail.

In the manner specified, so came the men. Not waiting for the midday meal, then about to be served, some dressing as shabby laborers, half-washed, some as young loafers, cheaply smart, some as decent, self-respecting citizens, and all in face and carriage solemnly bearing out their several parts, the detachments from the three Troop barracks shot out at the call.

But barracks reserves alone could not supply the full quota. So, in each Troop's case, men on substation must be drawn. With the result that, all through

the later afternoon and early evening, inconspicuous figures, lonely or in pairs, trudging along the streets of Philadelphia, gravitated to the door of that obscure Veterans' Hall. Entered in and disappeared, while not one thought of comment stirred to action in the mind of the idlest neighbor nor of the policeman on the beat.

So that when, by ten o'clock in the evening, Major Adams, Captains Gearhart and Price, Mr. Coughlin and Mr. Larzolere, entered the hall, the whole round number, to a man, saluted them.

An assembly less significant as to bearing and array never met the eye. For pure dull mediocrity or submediocrity in all its unemphasized drab forms, nothing further could be pictured. But for keen, luminous alertness, as the men, snapping to attention, listened to their orders, the last word stood there incarnate.

And something rose suddenly into Coughlin's throat, something blinded his eyes as his own black pain of late had ceased to do, at the sight of that magnificent young crusading spirit, up in arms for a rescue.

Now for the first time were they hearing why they had been summoned. With chiselled clearness their Commander explained his immediate plan and their duty therein; how they would be allotted, each to his zone; and how the white flag of the kidnapper would rise in one of those zones, to a certainty.

"In a murder we send out three men. But here a life is at stake — *a baby's life.* Keep that foremost in your minds. Every possible contingency has been

foreseen and provided for. No chance of a hitch remains unless some one man falls down absolutely. If the flag is raised in your zone, and you fail to get the man that raised it — no excuse will be good enough."

Did they want an excuse? Every lad on that floor, more than he asked for life itself, asked Fate to grant him just one little, little chance at the reptile that makes capital of mothers' love and babies' suffering.

The Commander looked down upon them with pride in his heart. How does it feel to wield an instrument like that — a clean, bright, infinitely sensitive instrument driven by the one all-victorious power, the power of the Spirit of the Service of God through Man in selfless wholeness?

It feels like what it is, a privilege beyond all price, a responsibility that no fit man dare retain except in all humbleness and self-watchfulness and by the guiding grace of his Maker.

"The man that captures the flag-raiser," said Adams, looking down at his hearers, "gets thirty days' leave, as a token."

But he smiled as he said it, as a man may smile at innocent folly.

Meantime, another thread had been weaving.

That afternoon, as the first lot reported in Philadelphia, a selected twelve men were summoned into the presence of Captain Gearhart. Briefly, Gearhart explained to them the shape of the case, and of the task before them.

"Now, boys," he finished, "you know your main duty. Captain Price will take you out over the At-

lantic City Railroad, giving you your final instructions. You are to act as guides for the others, in the morning. This fellow will appear to-morrow, somewhere between Camden and Atlantic City, with the flag. *He will not get away. Do you hear me?*"

So, as directed by Price — soldier born and soldier taught, soldier made and finished — the twelve entrained; not all at Philadelphia, mind you, but scattering along the road, each buying his own ticket to his own post. At last, as Camden Station rattled behind, the whole thirteen sat aboard — thirteen lumps of unnoticeability.

"What dull young men! What dull lives!" you might have thought, had you thought anything at all concerning them.

But, as the engine paralleled the farther boundary of Zone 1, Price spoke gently to the man beside him.

"There," he said, "begins your zone, Corporal. Get the picture of it into your head now. On the spot make yourself thoroughly acquainted with every feature in it. Find the best hiding-places for the men who will come to-morrow. Find and trace all trails, and be ready in the morning to tell the officer in charge of Zone 1's detail exactly where each of his men is to go."

Then, as they reached the station at that zone's farther end, Price, dropping his first man off, moved to a seat beside the next to go; and repeated the process till the last zone to be surveyed had duly received its scout.

After which, returning straightway to Philadelphia, he made for the Veterans' Hall.

The men as he entered fairly drank him in. Knowing personally every Trooper in the hall, Price now proceeded to assign them by name, and in groups, according to his own shrewd judgment, till the list and the map checked together.

"You have a fine section—a very likely spot. Up on your toes with you!" he privately told each detail.

And, the rascal, most thoroughly did he impress upon each and every detail commander that the great event was morally certain to come off in his own particular province.

"Now, then," he finished, to the lot, "each of you has a time-table. On each of those time-tables the zones are marked. The train that the Crank is looking for, the 2.10 Express, will run, from Camden on, ten minutes behind the schedule. On the schedule of the 2.10 will run, instead, a train consisting of an engine, three baggage cars, and a combination car. You will watch that combination car. As it passes your zone, if its windows are blank, you will know that the Crank and his flag are farther ahead — that the train has not yet passed him. You will then move up on the zone next beyond you, surrounding it. If, on the other hand, you see in a window, as the train passes you, a white card carrying the number of the zone next behind you, you will immediately leave your post, running back to surround that zone. But, if the number shown on the card is that of a zone more than one remove back, you will return quietly to the nearest railway station and take the next train home. We wish to attract the least attention possible."

Then, after midnight, Price left them, to take till morning such rest as the excitement would permit. None of them had eaten since noon, many of them not since breakfast. Scarcely would they taste food till the job was done. Food could not be brought into the hall, neither must any one of them rouse the slightest attention anywhere without.

Absolute secrecy, you see, was the core of success. One thinnest vapor of suspicion afloat, one littlest syllable breathed to the eager huntsmen of the press, and their whole plan was ruined, the criminal forever lost to justice, the last chance of the baby's life sacrificed. If little Blakeley indeed yet lived in the hands of "the Crank," he would draw his last breath on the moment that his captor learned of the net now swinging for him.

And some of the papers thus far, despite repeated pleas for another attitude, had displayed a greater consciousness of their duty to the public as news-purveyors than of their duty as coöperating factors in the public weal.

Meantime, as to those twelve scouts in the wilderness:

Dusk was falling, rain descending, as Price dropped his last man overboard into the brush. But the spirit that burned in them all burned white, white-hot. There alone in the dark, each had his bit to do for the Honor of The Force; nothing should stop his doing it to the very limit of human power — and then, perhaps, God helping him, just a little bit more.

Practically the whole belt from end to end is woodland, and practically all brush-covered bog. Corporal

Snodgrass, for example, working back from Pleasantville Terrace at the far end of the chart, splashed into a deep swamp. There did he stay, wallowing, till the end of the job. All night long he wallowed, looking for possible trails, using his flashlight but rarely and then with the greatest caution, working back and forth, back and forth, from the comparatively solid strip along the railway track through soft morass toward a rim of higher ground covered with stunted pine. Some two miles back from the track, he found, wandered the nearest highway — scarcely more than a path winding through pine scrub.

Twice during that night Snodgrass sat down. With what haste he might, he floundered up again. For the thick yellow water rose to his waist. And always mosquitoes covered him utterly.

The other eleven similarly slopped and slapped their way through the night — after the first ten minutes soaked to the skin with rain and with clay-choked bog water. Mosquitoes, likewise, ate them alive.

"We thought the Philippine mosquitoes were bad," said one, next day, "but compared to this Jersey swamp tribe Filipinos are as tame kittens to tigers."

After each successive shower of rain the creatures rose in masses like swarms of bees. Every move of a man's body in the sedge put them up in clouds. And their bite drew blood. By morning the faces of the twelve were swollen beyond recognition, their shirts were red, and their clothing stuck to the raw flesh. Three full months later the scars of that ordeal had not yet cleared away.

As dawn broke, the scouts, finishing their work, took careful cover in the brush, to avoid observation from passing trains. In their minds, by now, was stored every detail of the ground, every peculiarity of trail, foothold and cover.

At dawn, also, a further phenomenon occurred. A certain old "local" that potters about between Camden and Atlantic City took to doddering worse than ever, as though this time indeed "letting the old cat die." Having always stopped at unimagined stations, it now began stopping at mere crossroads — at nowhere at all.

"What in the world *is* the matter?" the few passengers asked, "Government ownership? — Spring-halt?"

"Search *me!*" sighed the conductor, too humble to resent what any man might say. "Them last two was flag stations. We gotta stop there if any one asks us. But nobody ever asked before!"

"Jew notice the couple o' young fellers just got off?" eagerly put in another. "Wa jew say? — Might be Federal men, huntin' for stills?"

"Federal fiddlesticks!" scoffed a third — "an' yet an' all, they might be huntin' all right, all right — like the rest of us poor devils. Good luck to 'em if they be!"

Price, sitting back in the midst of them, joined cheerfully in their laugh.

Every stop on the time-table did that devoted old local make. But only at its obscurest stations, at crossroads in the woods, did Price's ninety-two men, by twos and threes and fives, drop off.

And as each detachment took water, its commander, promptly in contact with his waiting scout, disposed his men in their right concealment, while the Captains of the three Troops represented, each on the spot, handled each his own men, after The Force's established principle.

Thus, by half after nine on the morning of August 2d, were one hundred and four officers and men of the Pennsylvania State Police Force mobilized *en masse* on the *cause célèbre* of the hour. And not a syllable of leakage occurred. Not a soul outside The Force save two alone were a whit the wiser.

So passed a long morning, while the hundred and four, breathing in red-hot mosquitoes, breathing out dumb wrath, soaked and bled and waited, hidden from mortal view in that slippery, slimy, bottomless swamp.

Murmured a young trooper to his Sergeant, "Suppose, now, the Crank did n't come!"

"Are you raving? A hundred and more of *Us* here to meet him and *him* not *come!*" . . . But words failed the senior to convey his scorn.

So passed noon, passed one, came two o'clock and nine minutes after.

Two-nine. In Camden Station, a plain little train slid over the track — just an ordinary, humble little no-account train, made up of an engine, plus one dingy combination and three old baggage cars.

An engineer and his fireman constituted all the crew.

"Kinda dull-lookin' proposition that, ain't it!" observed a station loafer to a shabby young man who sat on a baggage truck nursing a dog between his knees.

"You've said it," replied the other. "Reckon it's the Bivalve Accommodation."

"Wha' kinda dog you got there?" pursued the other. "Don' seem 's if I'd ever see jes' that kinda dog before."

"What, this?" the young man shifted the straw between his teeth. "Why, this here's what you call a red rabbit hound."

Then he hauled himself indolently together, and, with his dog, boarded the object of his own contempt — twelfth and last of its passengers.

So out of Camden Station lurched the dingy train. But if the station loafer could have followed it with his eyes a bit farther down the track, those eyes might have opened wider.

For suddenly, as though new life had struck it, the little old bobtailed thing began to go. In a moment or two it had reached the speed of an express. And by the time it passed the hither boundary of that road-section, known to a certain interested few as "Zone 1," it was skimming along like a hawk.

But, for reasons more conclusive than idleness, the loafer could not have watched that train far: Its bunker was filled with green coal. Its fireman was stoking green coal. And its engineer, moreover, had seen fit, as he pulled out of Camden, to close up his draft, with the result that the little dingy train almost at once disappeared behind a smoke-screen of its own making.

Yet, from the beginning of Zone 1, eyes watched the passer as she flew — sharp eyes peering through good cover. And when her windows showed blank to the end, figures still hidden in the brush sprang

backward and away, speeding east, as the train sped, behind cover.

On the train itself rode the Nerve-Trigger. Cocked. *Cocked.*

Adams sat in the cab — on his lips that queer, still smile, in his eyes that smouldering flare that comes with the final show-down. Gearhart, breathing hard, or scarcely breathing, yet the image of flawless composure, leaned forward in his seat in the combination coach, from time to time methodically handling a package of pasteboards; most methodically slipping a card to the back of the pack as the train flew on. Two Federal post-office inspectors, brought for a purpose — one of them a shortish, stoutish figure — occupied a seat to the rear of the coach.

Six non-committal young men sat between. In six stiff weeks of training the six best runners, these, developed out of the whole picked body in the Pennsylvania State Police Training School.

And, eleventh and last, Corporal John Russell, of "A" Troop, with his "red rabbit hound," otherwise Commissioner, Pride of the Troop, shivering between his knees.

Commissioner, the sole member of The Force who has not entirely grasped the art and requirements of camouflage, eased from one fore-quarter to the other, shuffling his big paws like a dancer, crooning to himself a small high song of prophecy, while he gazed into Russell's understanding eyes for the very thing he found there.

Zone 9, — 10, — 11.

No flag. No flag.

Just the same smooth scene that two of the company knew now so passing well. Each rod of it they could have mapped from memory.

Zone 12 — the rhythm of the wheels — the rack of the train — the green flow past the windows.

Zone 13 — Ellwood Station.

Adams, in the engine cab, leans forward a bit while that queer, still smile cuts just a trifle deeper and its light flares up in his eyes.

From Ellwood Station, for some four and a half miles a strip of woods parallels the tract, leaving between a cleared fire trail perhaps two hundred and fifty feet deep. The wood is choked with underbrush, behind whose fringe begins the swamp.

Zone 13 — flowing past. Adams, in the cab, motionless, brooding, watching, the spirit incarnate of the Ancient Hunt. Gearhart, in the coach, with a thought in his head for all mothers, a thought for a little life to win, inwardly vowing his all for victory, outwardly silken calm. Behind Gearhart the Six, close-nerved to the cracking point. Pressing hard against Russell's knees, Commissioner, raising ever high and higher his small, fine hymn of prophecy and war. Zone 13, green with sedges, flowing, flowing, flowing past.

Suddenly Adams draws back a bit. Ahead, on the right, two trees, advance-posts of the wood, aligned obliquely to the track. Between those trees — yes! — is stretched a sheet — in very truth a White Flag.

On flies little Bobtail, racketing, rocketing, champing furious at her green-coal fodder, blocking the air with ink.

Until, at Adams's "Now," she suddenly begins to slack down.

About a mile and a half from the flag it was. And while yet her pace runs fair, off leaps Adams, followed in a flash by the ten, the while that able smoke-screen, hugging close and heavy, forbids any observer from behind to know that Bobtail has slowed at all, or to detect the figures springing from her side.

Adams and Gearhart, each taking a trail, in an instant disappear.

The six runners spread out on either side of the track, the rebound of each man's leap lifting him into his first stride. A mile in five minutes is their practice pace — five minutes to a mile of woods and underbrush — terrible running. That leaves them, now, two minutes' margin to get back to the flag before the 2.10 Express shall pass.

For this were they trained and chosen. And this, calculated to a dot, is their allotted part — just to close up the net against any chance of the quarry taking to the open — against any last surprise that Fate might spring.

"When you get there, boys," Gearhart had impressed upon the runners, "keep away from the flag. Leave the dog a clean scent."

Do you call such people dogs?

Commissioner, boring between human legs, had sprung from the train third in the lot. His song silenced now, his whole mind and life and thought drove to the work he had to do.

How did he know?

How do all animals know? Not by slow and cumbrous speech, not by our poor means of intercourse, so often roundabout, so often blind. He knew, as we shall one day know, by the immediate touch of his mind on the minds of those around him. He *knew*. And he, too, gloriously resolved to do his finest.

Corporal Russell, his partner, held him on a leash. Over the open spaces he towed that corporal, who is well-limbed and wiry, by flying jumps.

But, in crossing the deep marsh patches, came the Corporal's turn to lend a hand. For Commissioner sank deep in the ooze between tussock and tussock, and it took all Russell's strength to give him purchase from jump to scramble. Not once, however, did his zeal flicker. And he, the gentle peace-lover, he whose daily hope and joy is to play pony for babies to ride, he who is crushed to earth by a spanking from his friend, reached now the full height of soldier comradeship.

As, fighting for footholds, he rose from one complete disappearance under thick bog-water, blood spurted from his leg. He had severed a big vein, on the harsh, hard, knife-edged grass. From that moment the blood pumped out in rhythmic jets as he ran.

Russell saw it with horror. But for neither of the two was there any stopping now.

The 2.10 Express thundered by within fifty yards, but the dog never spared it a glance. Plunging ahead, in advance of the man, not once did he mistake the way.

So they sighted the flag, these two, and sped toward it — the leader, all wounded and bleeding, yet pulling like a horse. Well back of the flag stood a knot of men. But Russell had his orders. Never stopping to look a second time at the group, he put his comrade straight to the flag, there where it hung between its two scrub-pines — let him catch the scent of it. And so, off — this time the dog pulling for good and all, in very truth.

Not a sound came from Commissioner now, nor had, since he plunged from the train. He ran with his nose to the ground, swiftly, in long strides. From the flag to a pile of railway ties; then, through short, well-defined excursions, some fifty yards forward toward the railway track. Then up the embankment to the roadbed. Then up the roadbed about three hundred and fifty yards. Thence, sharply and definitely wheeling, down to a spot in the swamp. And, finally, with a rush at right angles, straight to the group of men, now breathlessly watching the performance of their comrade in this his hour.

Like a shell from a .75 he clove the group to its core. Without a shadow of wavering did he single out one man who stood in the midst. Rising, he planted his two fore-paws on that man's breast, flung back his beautiful head and for the first time spoke — a deep, bell-throated, mournful, solemn bay. Proclaiming now, for all to hear, the Truth that his morning hymn had prophesied.

Nothing more did he want. With devotion and with brilliance he had done his duty to its perfect finish. For himself he had feared neither wounds nor

danger of death. He had sustained the law, brought crime to the light of justice. Now he bore no sort of malice, desired no sort of violence, gave thanks, without pride, that right had prevailed. In a word, he faithfully reflected the mind and spirit of the organization to which he belongs.

All this happened within five minutes after the capture.

Meanwhile, the men from the two ends of Zone 13, those from Zone 12 on the one hand and those from Zone 14 on the other, as well as the six special runners, had come swooping down. So that when Adams and Gearhart ran in, twelve minutes after the event — Adams and Gearhart, each of whom had been delayed by false scents on the way — the scene stood complete.

Lieutenant Snyder, from one end of Zone 13, Sergeant Parker, from the other, Privates Haggerty and Gecelosky, all "C" Troop men, now made their outline reports.

About half after one o'clock, they said, a man carrying a bundle under his arm, walking very jauntily, had come strolling down the track from Egg Harbor. Reaching a pile of ties by the roadbed (in the middle of Zone 13, had he but guessed), he sat down upon the pile and lit a cigarette.

The cigarette smoked out, this leisurely wayfarer opened his parcel — took out a white sheet. Then he drew from his pocket a ball of cord, tied a length of cord to each of two corners of the sheet, and proceeded to attach the loose ends to two pine trees that stood near the pile of ties. He fastened the cords.

Then he spread the sheet flag fashion between the trees, surveyed it a moment critically, lighted a fresh cigarette, looked at his watch, and lay down, out of sight, behind a clump of brush.

During all of which proceeding, Private Haggerty, of the Pennsylvania State Police Force, could have laid hand upon him, by taking a few long steps.

But orders were, "Let him pick up the package to be thrown from the Express."

The moment for the passing of the Express arrived. An approaching engine boomed loud. Out of the clump of brush rose a head — gazed, ducked, and reappeared to gaze again, as Bobtail flew by without a sign.

The man in the bush arose, stepped forth, took out a time-table and studied it. Looked at his watch again, then up and down the track. Moving back to the pile of ties, he sat down and smoked another cigarette. More and more obvious became the nervousness that grew upon him.

"And yet" — his thought stood clear enough to read — "time-tables do sometimes change."

Nevertheless, his uneasiness waxed fast. Presently he sprang up, so clearly with the intent to leave that Haggerty had almost launched himself in a jump.

But at that very instant came the rumble and roar of the 2.10 itself — the true Atlantic City Flyer. Hastily, the watcher re-concealed himself. And this time, from one of the coach windows, an arm thrust forth just as it passed the wayside flag — an arm, with a parcel in its hand, the hand tossing the parcel off.

The watcher, half-crouched in the brush, watched as that train reeled out of sight. Then he stood forth, swept the scene about him with his eyes, and, finding himself utterly alone and unobserved, walked slowly up the embankment, to the track, along the roadbed to the point where lay the parcel that had fallen from the express.

Why did he stand so long, idly looking at it? Why did he not pick up the thing he had so clearly come to get?

As though puzzled in his own mind, he stood hesitating, with bowed head. At last he turned — looked up the road — looked down the road — uttered one wild exclamation — broke for the bush.

And landed splash into the arms of Private Gecelosky.

Had he jumped the other way, Sergeant Parker would have embraced him. Had he tried the track itself, up or down, the men whose approach he had seen would have gathered him in. On the other side of the embankment, the way stood as squarely barred.

And exactly the same thing would have proved true had he chosen for his operation any other practicable spot in the whole fifty-seven miles. Not the ghost of a chance had he, anywhere. Not one.

But, now that it was over, the man himself was incredible. His calm — his mild, cool, passionless calm. His ripple of untroubled lies.

"I did not hang up the flag. I know nothing about it," he had asserted, till Commissioner's tragic pæan, more than the word of three true men, dislodged him.

Then: "Yes — I hung up the flag. A man asked me to do it for him. I don't know what for," he as calmly averred, his manner, the while, utterly detached.

"The rest of this can wait till we cross the State line," said Adams to Gearhart. Accompanied by one trooper only, they steered the captive into the bush.

Back on the highway — the outbound trail that wanders through the scrub — they found what they looked for, one William Coulter, at the wheel of a shiny, brand-new Packard car; Mr. Bill Coulter, now as ever in the right place at the right time, doing the right thing.

"You'll want speedy cars on this case off and on — speed that you know won't fail you, and a driver you know you can trust. Would you consider my car and me? Anywhere, any hour, any day, any night?"

So had spoken Bill Coulter, early in the game. And The Force, before now, had taken him at his word.

"He's a real man, and a true sport," said The Force. "He'll stick to his friends to the finish, and, for the matter of that, he likes baby-killers about as much as we do."

Beside Mr. Coulter sat Captain Price. And Price, as the car fled lunging and bouncing along the trail, told a story of down the track.

Certain inhabitants of Egg Harbor, he narrated, had remarked Little Bobtail's behavior, in suddenly slowing where slowing is not done, had beheld men spring from her sides like the Greeks from the Horse of Troy, and thereupon had gone mad.

"Train robbers! Brigands! Revolutionists! Here in our city to attack us!"

And if the conduct of the invaders in rushing with all speed in an opposite direction failed quite to bear out that view, much surely could be forgiven the inhabitants of Egg Harbor, who are n't served caviare daily.

They rushed to their Mayor, they roused their Town Marshal — and by the time three Zone 14 men, racing like greyhounds, reached the place and would have crossed it, Egg Harbor's manhood barred the way in outraged majesty.

Now Zone 14 did look oddish, from Egg Harbor's point of view. Zone 14 had already lost a good share of its raiment, partly by discarding for speed, partly by the detaining clutch of briar and bough, as it tore through the bush. Zone 14 revealed much surface of ripped and bleeding flesh, much absence of conventional garments. But all its full cartridge belts and all its big, black automatics showed up right there.

And, conversely, from Zone 14's point of view, Egg Harbor had surely no physical power to stop it for the space of one little breath.

But Zone 14 must move wisely. It was out of its sovereign territory — out of Pennsylvania — and the Honor of The Force lay in its hands. Yet — would the kind gods, therefore, permit Egg Harbor, New Jersey, to tear out Zone 14's heart?

"They had twelve bloodhounds — those bandits that jumped from the train. There were forty men! It's an insurrection!" panted one loyal citizen to his

world. "How much ammunition have we got? Who's got guns?"

Said the Town Marshal to Zone 14 — "I arrest you, in the name of the law."

And just at that moment, as by direct answer to prayer, appeared the nose of a brand-new Packard car, with four familiar eyes just above it.

"What's this?" asked Price, in the quiet little voice that he keeps for specially rapid business.

The Town Marshal, learning that his questioner embodied the authority of the neighboring Commonwealth, explained.

"Happily, I can reassure you," returned Price, "for I am in on this myself, with the Federal officers."

"Yes," echoed a stoutish, shortish, hatless, breathless man, now pushing through the crowd. "I am a United States Postal Inspector. *I* came on that train, and would be with those fellows you saw, right now, if I was built to run like they can. God knows I tried, but I could *not* make it! Let these men go, *quick!* They're needed beyond. This is a United States case, and does n't concern you." And he showed good proof of his own identity.

Adams and Gearhart laughed a bit as they heard the tale. For it depicted exactly a situation that they had both foreseen and forestalled when they took the two postal men into their company. In crossing into New Jersey to work, they were invading a foreign State. Circumstances, nevertheless, forbade their risking publicity by procuring powers. But, an actual violation of the Federal postal laws had been committed when "the Crank" burdened

the mails with threatening letters. And no local authority could challenge the Federal Government's punitive hand.

Now, as the shiny new Packard lunged ahead with Coulter's foot firm on the gas, the three officers of the State of Pennsylvania looked well at their prisoner.

As their practised glance measured him, he showed about thirty-six years, height a little over the medium, build sinewy. His swarthy skin matched dark Italian eyes and hair. Cheekbones high and broad, nose rather finely cut, long and aquiline. A sharp, dark, glittering eye, a broad intelligent forehead, a hard mouth, set in lines of cruelty.

"Where," said Adams, "is the Coughlins' baby?"

The prisoner returned his look with one of patience — of unmoved endurance.

"Coughlins? I don't understand. I don't know about any baby."

"Other people know about the Coughlin baby," said Gearhart grimly. "Some one kidnapped him, you see. People around here don't like baby-stealers. They may think you stole Baby Coughlin. Look at that bunch of men, beyond. It would n't be wonderful if they'd come out to lynch you."

The prisoner, springing half to his feet, peered ahead. Surely enough, a group of men stood in the road, signalling the car to stop.

With a smothered scream, he flung himself on the floor. Grovelled, patting his captors' knees with tremulous, clutching, fluttering hands. Wept, praying, kissing their boots, hideously.

"Don't let them take me," he wailed. "*Don't* let them *get* me!"

"Then where is the Coughlins' child?" asked Adams, seizing his chance.

Two seconds' pause — then the flutter and the tumult ceased, as a still voice answered, from down among the boots:

"What do I know of any child?"

Whispered Adams to Gearhart: "A physical coward with the brain of a fox."

Part III

In the flag-hanger's pockets, when they snared him there in the swamp, they had found some interesting objects; as, a ball of twine, like that with which the flag was hung; a visiting card bearing the words

August Pascal

New Gretna

N.J.

and the deed of a property embracing a house and some four acres of land, lying in New Gretna, New Jersey, lately conveyed, for the sum of $1700, to one August Pascal.

It was that deed, that visiting card, that now directed the leaps and lurches of Mr. William Coulter's brand-new high-powered car through the Jersey marshes.

Through the mosquito-marshes to New Gretna, a tiny village six miles from Tuckerton, on the main travel-route between New York and Atlantic City. And there to a decent frame house — August Pascal's deeded demesne.

Now, of all the eager Companions of The Force that day besetting the path of the flag-hanger, not one but was bitterly disappointed that the man came alone to his work — that he had not brought the baby. Yet, with the discovery of his probable abode, hope rose keen again.

In his home would be the child.

But the New Gretna house, whose ownership the prisoner admitted, contained no human inhabitant when the officers of the State reached it — displayed no trace of recent occupancy by more than one person. One room only had been lately used. By one side of its tumbled bed stood a rifle, by the other a shotgun, both loaded. A lonely bulldog was locked within, a lonely collie mourned in the barn. On the bureau lay several articles of jewelry — a wrist watch, a signet ring, and other relatively costly objects. In a drawer were filed certain accounts of money expended. In the closet hung certain old coats.

But throughout the search, the prisoner remained an immobile spectator, betraying neither interest nor uneasiness in the rifling of his goods. And steadfastly, wearily, patiently, did he continue to deny any knowledge of what it might all be about.

At last, having for the moment finished the job, they turned themselves about and sped for Trenton as straight as roads would take them — and so across the Delaware to their own Pennsylvania soil.

At three o'clock that morning, August 3d, August Pascal, suspected of kidnapping Blakeley Coughlin, lay under guard of Pennsylvania State Police officers in the Norristown hot-box.

August Pascal, suspect, captured. But no evidence yet, to convict. Little Blakeley Coughlin's fate still an engima every whit as dark as before.

Thus began the second stage in the desperate game of wit against wit, with a mother's heart and a baby's life-blood for the sweep-stake.

The Coughlins, looking the prisoner over, could associate nothing with him—had never knowingly seen him before. So his captors took him to the State Police Headquarters at Harrisburg, to pursue his examination. No cross-questioning feazed him, however. Coolly and quietly did he continue his disclaimers.

Meanwhile a fine piece of coöperation set forward, between, on the one hand, the City Police of Philadelphia, who, under Captain Souder, worked night and day, full-manned, running down every city clue with splendid vigor; and, on the other hand, the State Police, who handled in particular all that concerned the rural parts. And so at last one scrap of news came in — one scrap of dynamic potency.

"August Pascal," as the City Force had discovered, lately occupied a room in a house on Seventh Street, Philadelphia. One of the City Force's detectives, Mr. Gibson, doing an excellent piece of work, now discovered in the stove in that room a partly burned envelope upon which was written several times over, as by one practising, the name and address of George H. Coughlin. The paper, the ink, the handwriting, exactly matched those appearing in the blackmailing letters of "the Crank."

In possession of that object, Adams summoned the prisoner into his presence.

"Did you write letters to Mr. Coughlin, demanding money for his baby's life?"

Pascal wearily murmured "No."

"I will show you a picture: In your room on Seventh Street," pursued the interrogator, then for the first time exhibiting his knowledge of that room; "you sat at your table, writing. You spoiled an envelope, practising upon it. You put the envelope in the stove. There was no fire, so you set a match to it and closed the stove door, expecting it to burn up.

"But" — and here Adams, leaning forward, rose to his full six feet, while his eyes glowed black and terrible, like coals of unearthly fire — "But — *you* counted only with man. *God* intervened. *God* put that fire out! Look!"

And he thrust the charred damnation before his prisoner's gaze.

Pascal stared like a creature turned to stone. A moment he gasped — seemed about to faint. For a moment again, he sat silent; then raised his head, calm as before.

"Well, since you know. Yes, I *did* write those letters. But not for myself. It was the morning after the baby was stolen. A man named Joe came to my room and asked me to write for him.

"'August, I want you to write some letters,' he said.

"But he had to tell me just what to write. Because I cannot lie. Asking for the ransom money. I never saw the child. Afterward, I read things about it in the paper. But all I ever did was to write as Joe told me. I know nothing at all. Not even Joe's other name."

Nor could the utmost endeavors take him farther.

At the end of a week, therefore, a week in which a mass of investigation of barren leads went forward to its natural but necessary finish, back to Norristown went the prisoner of the State, committed to the County Jail.

Meantime, from another direction a gleam had broken. Searching the house at New Gretna, an officer of The Force discovered, hidden between the lining and the cloth of an old pair of trousers, and folded very small, a slip of paper bearing a sort of cryptogram — a string of letters and figures, mingled; as, JP 45 BW 1000 JPP 5+7 PP 1500, etc.

Now, thanks to the Criminal Identification Bureau, one of the first fruits of Pascal's sojourn in State Police Departmental Headquarters had been his identification with one variously known as Augusto Pasquale, John Pierre Pons, Julius Pons, and Harvey Williams, under which names he had served divers prison terms for divers serious offences.

From the cryptogram plus this list, Gearhart, after a bit of thought, deduced a theory. With Gearhart's theory in hand, Mr. Holtby, of the Federal Postal Service Inspectors' Department, an untiring worker, sped to New York. And, within twenty-four hours of the finding of the puzzle, Holtby had run down the facts that it at once concealed and represented. Julius Pons, for example, had deposited in the bank at Forty-Fifth Street and Broadway, $1000. Similarly, John Pierre Pons had deposited $1500 in the bank at 5 and 7 Park Place. And so on.

All of which information, by the way, Gearhart immediately gave to Mr. Coughlin, with the request that he proceed at once to garnishee his money.

In the interval, Captain Gearhart had been working to discover just what money Pascal had handled since July 14, the date of the lifting of the $12,000 from the station at Swedeland.

He computed the expenditure in view at New Gretna: The property itself, at $1700; the furniture in the house, for which Pascal had paid to the former owner $135; the motor truck standing in the barn, just purchased for $600; the two guns; the two dogs. Then he added the contribution of Private Gosselin, of "C" Troop, returning from New York with proof that Pascal had bought at a certain clothier's in that city two suits of clothes, at $50 and $80; and that he had further purchased for certain known sums at a certain jeweller's a diamond and platinum ring, a scarf-pin, three watches, and other similar articles.

The total of all these, added to the amount of the various bank deposits, plus a likely allowance for running expenditures in the interval, fell short by just about $1000 of the $12,000 extorted from Mr. Coughlin as a ransom for his baby son.

"That," said Gearhart, "ends the theory of his having an accomplice. He has kept all or almost all the money himself. Would any accomplice work for nothing? Or, for merely a thousand dollars?"

And he proceeded at once to confront the prisoner of Norristown Jail with the new evidence and the logical conclusion.

"Well — since you know, yes, — I did have some little hand in the kidnapping. But I never saw the baby. I will tell you now all the truth.

"I was sitting in a Chinese restaurant in Race Street, with Joe and a woman named Rose, when a lady with a thick veil over her face came in and beckoned to Joe. She and Joe talked. I heard Joe say:

"'Nothing doing. $10,000 or nothing.'

"She said, 'All right.'

"Then Joe came back to us.

"'I'm going to do a little job. I need your help. That lady is rich. Her son was killed in the war with France. So she wants a certain baby that is in Norristown. She wants us to get it for her. Afterwards she don't care if we scare money out of the baby's father on our own account. But she says we must hurry about that part because the baby is sick, anyway, and if it dies she is going to send the body back to the parents. Of course we could n't pull anything after she'd done that. We'll work together, August, and get some good money.'

"So we went next night to the Coughlins' house and tried to get in. But we could not. Two nights after, we went back again. Me and Joe and Rose in Joe's car, the lady with the veil following in a limousine. We got a ladder from the house that is being built, close by. Joe went into the house. I stood with a flashlight, watching. Joe brought the baby down. I flashed the light. The lady with the veil drove up, fast. She handed Joe the package with the $10,000 and took the baby and drove off, very fast again.

"Then Joe and I wrote the letters.

"But before Mr. Coughlin paid the $12,000, Joe got cold feet and quit. One time, though, just after I picked up the money, I came to my room and found Joe sitting there. And I gave him $1000 just to make things square. Then we each had $11,000.

"You have found what I did with that $11,000."

"And where is the baby now, Pascal?"

"The lady gave him to Joe to keep. He is down in the swamp, near Egg Harbor. Joe and Rose have him there in a house. I saw the baby the day before you arrested me. Why, Joe was walking around with me all that day, right up to the time I went to hang the flag."

Under cover of night, they took him to Egg Harbor. At early dawn they brought him into the swamp, to the spot where "Joe's" house should stand.

No house there.

"Yes, since you see — I lied," he admitted. "I needed time. I have to think."

All that last day, he had affirmed, Joe was with him, "right up to the time I went to hang the flag."

But Corporals Snodgrass and Haines had another tale to tell. Inch by inch those two had traced and checked his movements during that same last day. And now their completed picture showed him, early in the morning, at the New Gretna post-office, boarding a jitney bus; later, at Tuckerton, where his nervous fingers drum on the station window-ledge as he buys his ticket for Camden; then, still in Tuckerton, in Brown's Hotel, where he talks about his bulldog while laying in his supply of Fatimas and several glasses of beer; then in the dry-goods store, where, growling at the price, he buys his white sheet and

some Spearmint gum. Then to Camden, and so back to Egg Harbor Station. Thence he proceeds on foot up the railway track toward Ellwood, his parcel under his arm. And always, everywhere, the picture shows him alone.

City and State Police together, hunting Philadelphia's Chinatown through, found "Rose" — and discarded her. She existed — she was there. But she had naught to do with the case. As for Joe, The Force took no stock in him at all. It is exceedingly difficult, it appears, to give a physical description of a man you have never seen, to add to that description a past history, and then, at successive intervals, to repeat your statement not only with accuracy, but without hesitation for recollecting thought.

So difficult that, bit by bit, through many and separate statements, Pascal unwittingly conferred upon his "Joe" a combination of characteristics so curious that, as Captain Gearhart said:

"Joe must look like a Christmas tree."

Not in the least did it trouble Pascal to be caught lying. From the very moment of his capture, he had proved himself the finest master of the art that, in all its rich experience, The Force had ever known. Nothing really jolted him out of his self-confidence. If he was, by some swift surprise, shaken in his calm, never did he permit himself either to speak or act till his poise had fully returned. Every nerve was alert, always and always, for whatever might come. And, each time a lie was proved upon him, gracefully, easily would he admit as a lie that which was proved such — just that and no more.

Then he would tell another story, in which a grain of truth lay somewhere embedded — just enough to give it the elusive spine of verisimilitude that his cause required.

Off, then, went The Force on a fresh hunt to prove or disprove the tale. But if "the Crank" gained time thereby, so did The Force gain, if only by elimination, inch by inch nearing that goal that it was vowed to touch.

Meantime, the officers of The Force had their own theory as to what had happened to little Blakeley Coughlin. They believed the crime to have been committed solely with the intention of getting money. They believed that Pascal alone, without any confederate, having felt out the land on a previous night, had come into the neighborhood of the ridge cottage on the midnight of the kidnapping. That there, from the vantage-ground of the highroad embankment, screened by the Coughlins' hedge shrubbery and profiting by the household habit of leaving curtains undrawn, he had spied till the last light went out, till all was confirmed in peace. That he then had gone to the neighboring building under construction and thence had taken a ladder and an old black coat. That, having brought that ladder into the Coughlin garden, he had placed it against the nursery window, staying its foot by a heavy flower-box that chanced to stand near by. That then he himself and no other had mounted the ladder, and, by the aid of the flooding moonlight, had carefully surveyed the little room in which the baby lay, noting with satisfaction the closed door beyond. That, panther-like, he had stolen

across the room to the crib, and, drawing the baby up into his arms, had rolled it in that old black coat. That when the little helpless thing instinctively cried out at the strange touch, he had clapped a hand on its mouth and throat and kept it there while he glided back to the window, noiseless except for the creak of the cribside as he lifted himself erect with the child in his arms — and so down the ladder and swiftly away in the dark.

And that the baby, because of the kidnapper's necessity to keep him silent, had died of suffocation within two minutes of the time when his mother had started at the sound of his one cry — that tiny, broken fragment of a baby's wail.

The Force held the theory in its inner mind. But it did not lay its belief before the prisoner. To betray to him a mistaken opinion, to tax him with anything but an absolute fact was to provoke him to laughter, to stimulate in him a spirit of success that delayed the game.

So Major Adams, endlessly pondering, endlessly experimenting, borrowed a page from Muensterberg and tried the word-association test. First, then, he compiled a list of some fifty words in no way, to his knowledge, connected with the crime — "harmless words." Then he said to the prisoner, frankly:

"Now I am going to test you. You must play fair. I shall pronounce a series of words. After each word I shall pause and you, at once and without hesitation, will answer with the first word that comes into your mind."

Behind the prisoner, as the test began, sat an officer holding, unseen, a split-second watch.

"Sky," said the Major.

"Blue," responded Pascal.

"Pavement," said the Major.

"Street," said Pascal.

And so, as they proceeded down the "harmless" fifty, the man with the stop-watch determined Pascal's normal speed in word-association.

That speed once established, the Major began on a fresh list.

"Crime," said the Major.

Twice the normal interval elapsed. Then said the prisoner, "Stealing."

Now, the subject of the test is naturally under the impression that his chosen word carries the evidence; whereas that evidence is held to lie not in the word itself, but in the interval elapsing between question and response. An interval above the normal shows a pause, on a dangerous word, for thought and substitution. At the word "crime" the kidnapper stops to seek a word other than that first in his mind — kidnapping.

After another string of "harmless" words —

"Flower," said the Major.

Three times the normal time did Pascal pause, then —

"Rose," said he.

"Church," said the Major.

"Religion," came back promptly.

"Steam," said the Major.

"Pressure," as promptly.

"Box," said the Major. And the prisoner stuck again.

A flower-box had stayed the foot of the ladder beneath the window of the baby's room.

And "ladder" and "overcoat" and "hole," too, bothered him — "hole" very particularly. But "slag-dump" stayed him not at all.

Now certain of the State Police officers had felt that the man's likeliest disposition of a little dead child would be to throw it upon one of those great, always-burning mountains of wastage that dot the country about Norristown, there to be quickly and utterly consumed.

"It was not in a slag-dump," said the Major, after his test. "But somewhere in this story there is some sort of a hole."

And so the days ran into weeks. And so the weeks ran on. And so the prisoner continued his equable patter. Sometimes his latest "confession" of "the whole truth" would convey a definite possibility of proof, pro or con — proof that the baby was dead — proof that the baby lived. Then The Force, at top speed, would hunt it down — but still and still again to draw a blank.

And always, all over the country, sprang up more dreamers of dreams where the baby lay concealed; more reports of babies seen in dubious hands — babies answering the description of the missing child; more blackmailing claimants of a price for the baby's life. Always The Force, in the several Troops, lived on the hunt — the secret hunt. And in that process many a criminal did it quietly wipe off the list of public dangers.

Meantime, public interest in the matter never flagged and the persistence of Pascal in his silence as in his lies aroused an echo of public wrath.

"Make an end of this. Feed him on nothing but salt fish. Let him eat salt fish or starve. Then give him nothing to drink — not a drop of anything at all — till he shows you that baby, alive or dead," wrote one woman to the Department of State Police.

But the State Police do not work that way.

Also, they firmly believed that their only route to knowledge of the baby's fate lay through the mind of the prisoner. Upon their skill in handling that super-sensitive, wholly erratic element depended all that lay at stake. A humor of bravado obstinacy would have been his logical response to rough handling, to any show of pressure. The State Police was in to win. It could n't win that way.

Curiously, the first thing that operated to change Pascal's indifferent, careless, sometimes even snarlingly contemptuous bearing, was the discovery that the Sheriff had attached his house, his bank-account, his jewelry, all he had thought he possessed. With the coming of that news his nerve wilted. Thence on, he sat quiet, silent; to questions, by whomever put, answering or not answering as seemed to him good.

From this point forward, they left him almost alone. A State Police Trooper, day and night, sat at the door of his cell. But no one appeared to question or to see him. No news reached him, in any shape. Nothing came from anywhere to give his extra-active brain fresh fruit for thought.

So, just as they of The Force had calculated, that mind began to grind upon itself. The man burned with anxiety to know how much his captors had

found out. Their absence, their silence, tortured him. He conceived the idea that he might be tried for murder. Then, increasingly, he dwelt, in his solitude, on a punishment other than that appointed by law — a punishment sometimes dispensed by a furious public to the author of a revolting crime.

"Beg them to take me to Philadelphia!" he pleaded, to the Trooper at the door. For he feared a storming of Norristown Jail.

The Trooper made no reply.

"Are there many people in the street outside?"

"Sometimes. Very many."

"*Why do they come?*"

No reply.

And all the ghastly while, the mother and father of the missing child dwelt in an uncertainty more terrible than any knowledge.

Hope, for them, had come to mean hope that their little one had passed beyond the reach of pain. In each sight or story of living misery that came to their ken, they saw a picture of what their baby might now be. Yet, to the unending admiration and respect of their daily co-workers, the officers of The Force, they dominated every personal impulse, and, gentlemen both, *played the game.*

One day, when the silence had long endured, Mrs. Coughlin said to Gearhart:

"I have a hope that if I were to go into his cell and ask him myself — I, the baby's mother — he might be moved to pity."

"*Can* you do it?" asked Gearhart.

She only looked her reply.

"I know," said the Captain — "forgive me."

That night, near midnight, he escorted her to the jail.

They gave her, for the ordeal, a private room. Gearhart, concealed behind a screen, remained with her. The sentinel and the warden awakened Pascal from his sleep and, without explanation, thrust him into her presence. Themselves retiring, they closed the door.

That awful encounter the prisoner took without one flicker. Calm always, always circumspect, he answered the young mother's pleading — and finally her tears.

"Only tell me where you have put his poor little body!" she begged. "Only let me know that my baby is safely dead!"

"I did not take him. I never had him. Joe has him. He is alive," he persisted.

And though once his throat muscles began to knot and break, and once his voice trembled — which perceiving, her hope strung tense — in an instant he had caught his composure back again, renewing the old tale.

But from that moment his worst fear, short of the fear of mob violence, was lest he again be forced to face the mother of the child.

"*Don't* make me see her! *Don't* let her see me!" he would entreat, in his terror for once forgetting the implication in the words.

Then silence, solitude, once more engulfed him. Barren day and lonely night the wheel of his thought labored on, unfed, grinding ever nearer to the raw quick of his soul.

"Have you any light?" the mother would ask.

"No," came the answer, day by day — "no. But it's coming."

The sentinel reported that his prisoner slept less and less, that he murmured uneasily in his snatches of unconsciousness. And that the fear of lynching visibly grew in his mind. It was practically an obsession now. In his nervousness he talked more and more to that unresponsive trooper guard. As:

"I could tell you a lot of things if I wanted to."

"I am not forcing you," answered the Trooper, unmoved.

"I would like to shave."

"I have nothing to do with that."

"But listen, then: About five years ago I shot a Polish fellow. We had been drinking together, pretty hard. He was going to hit me with a bottle, and I pulled my gun and shot him. A second fellow came, and I shot him, too. I did n't stop to see if they were dead. Maybe I killed them both."

No comment.

"Well" — querulously — "what do you say to that?"

"I say," said the Trooper drily, "that that may be so and may be not."

"But — you *know* a man is n't going to tell you he killed somebody when he did n't!"

"I know, Pascal, that you are the most tireless liar I ever saw."

"Yes" — sighed Pascal — "yes."

Silence again. No effect from his story. Day after day no visit, no word from without, while he tore at himself with the question:

"What have they found out? How much do they really know?"

At last — it was on the 10th of October that it happened — came news: Pascal desired to see the Commanding Officer of the Pennsylvania State Police Force, Major Adams himself.

The Trooper at the cell door conveyed that request to Captain Gearhart, conducting the case. Captain Gearhart, judging that the hour might be ripe and that wisdom might indicate humoring its trend, in his turn relayed the message to Harrisburg. Major Adams, at the word, betook himself from Harrisburg to Norristown Jail just as quick as wheels could speed him.

Pascal, as the Major entered the cell, rose from the chair at the foot of his cot. His swarthy Italian color was gone now, leaving a sort of transparent, aqueous, yellow-white. His black, wide-set eyes had lost their size and their glitter. Now they seemed small and brown and rather dim. His hard-cut mouth had disappeared under a moustache, and a beard concealed the aggressive outline of his jaw. His long, slender hands looked weak.

"You may sit down," said the Major, seating himself. "What have you to say?"

"I wish to confess."

The Major showed no interest. "Very well," he responded indifferently.

"I wish to confess. Last June in Philadelphia, I killed a woman. I hit her with a piece of slate — and she died. It was . . ."

The Major cut him short. "I have no desire to hear more of that," he said. "Just one thing is

wanted from you. When you are ready, you may tell me what you did to the Coughlins' baby. Till you are ready to do just that, you need say nothing at all."

"But the woman — "

"The woman does not matter now."

The prisoner looked at the floor, while his long, thin fingers, hanging together between his knees, twined over and around each other nervelessly. He wet his lips, looking down. Wove his fingers, weakly, looking down. Cleared his throat faintly, like one far gone in fever.

When at last he resumed speech it was in a voice so low that at times it trailed to the very verge of silence. And — as if his mind had made itself there a permanent dwelling-place — he started, without prelude of explanation, at the climax of his crime.

"I wanted to find out how to get through the window. I went to the house that was building. I thought they had some ladder. I got the ladder. I found a coat there and I put that coat on my shoulders to keep the weight off. I got inside the room — "

"What did you set against the foot of the ladder to brace it, when you set the ladder at the window?" Adams interjected.

"A flower-box that stood there. — As I got inside — the baby" — here he stopped, wet his lips again, then resumed the narrative with difficulty. "The baby started to cry — not much — but I — wrapped him up in the coat and — and — set him against my breast.

"I came down the ladder. As soon as I got down I heard some one talking, inside the house. So I

started to run — across the road — past all the houses — out across the fields. And as soon as I dared I stopped and opened up the coat and — looked — looked at the baby — and — it was passed — gone."

The man's voice, nearing those last words, had almost vanished. The corners of his mouth seemed suddenly vague — powerless. He lifted his eyes like a creature in deeps of pain, almost spent with exhaustion, dumbly appealing for pity. Yet in a flash, as if unable to bear another human being's gaze, looked down.

"You mean," asked Adams, "that the baby, when you looked at him, under the coat, was dead?"

"Yes, sir — I had it — pressed up against — my breast — "

"You did n't intend to kill the baby?" Adams's tone was very quiet — very gentle — conveying neither judgment nor heat. He might have been some patient, sagacious, deeply experienced physician, listening without surprise to a tale as old as human ills.

"You did not intend to kill the baby?"

"No, sir" — the words came almost in a sob.

"What were you going to do with him?"

"I was going to put it at Swedeland — to get a room and take the baby there."

"What did you do when you found the baby was dead?"

"I — I took it down to the river and — and — threw it in."

"Where?"

"About two miles from there."

"Threw it out in the current where the water could carry it away?"

"No — it did n't carry it away."

"Do you think it could be found now?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why?"

"Because — I put a piece of rail — from the railroad — a piece I found — put it — "

"Put it in the baby's nightdress?" suggested the Major, when the speaker's voice once more fainted into silence as if before the horror of his inner mind.

"No — I — I burned the nightdress. So he was — naked — I tied him to the rail with a piece of cord — wound it around him and tied it at his neck and his feet. Then I threw him in."

"Can you take us to the place where you threw the baby in?"

"Yes, sir."

Said the Major — "That is enough for now."

Again the prisoner rose, with his eyes following his visitor as he left the cell. A confessed murderer and worse than that, his appearance disconcertingly conflicted with his just-told tale.

Later — October 21st — a reporter of the "Philadelphia North American" gave a courtroom picture of him that, for truthful and keen characterization, would be hard to surpass:

He wore the aspect of a saint whose soul was exalted in sacrifice. . . . Black eyes looked around with an abstract and gentle expression. . . . A person that had looked closely at Augusto Pasquale in any other place or any other

circumstances, would have chosen him as a perfect type from which to create a fanatic of idealism or a character in a passion play. . . .

The man who wrote that, whoever he is, knows how to see for himself and, having seen, to tell. And, even in the moment of confession, almost shocking though it be to admit, the core of that description was already just.

"Now," said Adams, when the cell-door had swung shut, "I believe that we have the truth at last. The truth about the baby."

In the small hours next morning, while yet it was full dark, clouding for rain, Captain Gearhart appeared in Norristown Jail — appeared to Corporal Snodgrass (late United States Marines) standing guard before Pascal's door.

"I'm going to handcuff him to you, Corporal, and take him out."

"To the spot . . ." asked the prisoner.

"Yes."

"Is the baby's mother coming? No! *No! No!* Don't *let* her be there! *Don't!*" he begged.

"Mrs. Coughlin is not to come," said Gearhart quietly, never unkindly.

He had no desire to disturb the man's mind.

A quarter of a mile away, up a dark lane in the sleeping town, they found Mr. Coughlin waiting in a car. At once they set forth for the cottage on the ridge.

"We want you to get your bearings," said Gearhart, as they neared the Coughlins' home. "Do you know where you are?"

"Yes," answered Pascal. "I see the house."

"Where did you go from here?"

Following his statement step by step they dropped down into the flat country and there, in an open field, left the motor.

Starting now on foot, they followed the railroad track for three or four minutes in silence, walking the ties.

"Do you know where you are?" asked Gearhart.

The prisoner hesitated, vainly trying to pluck forth landmarks from the thick concealment of the night. Black. All black, without shape or feature. Black, black murk.

Then a wild thing happened: Out of pure space bloomed a sudden flower of flame — a great red glow, endured a few seconds and was gone. In the heart of that glow stood revealed, just ahead, the jaws of an abyss — a deep rock cut, gaping black as the mouth of The Pit.

"There!" came the voice of the prisoner, choking, gasping, half-whisper, half-scream — "*There!*" and he seemed about to drop in his tracks. "*I* — walked through — *that* — *with him hugged dead in my arms!* — Ah! — The *hole! The hole!*"

"Do you remember anything beyond? At the spot itself?"

For a moment no answer, save the man's dry, shivering sob. Then:

"Beyond — by the river — there was a high bush —"

As they felt their way through the depths of the cut, Snodgrass, close-bound to the prisoner as he was,

wrist by wrist, felt him staggering, swaying, trembling — his whole body rent as with an ague.

Once again, as they emerged upon open track, that swift unearthly tide flushed the sky — reflection from the flow of molten metal spilled upon some mountainous slag-dump as red-hot lava floods volcano sides.

"This is the place," breathed Pascal. And the man who stood manacled to him, staring down horrified into the face revealed by that strange light, thought he had never seen such a look before on any human countenance.

Straight, without wavering, he led them into an old quarry, to a pile of railroad iron, whence, he said, he had taken his piece of rail. Again, unhesitating, to the place where he found the cord. Then, by a little path among the weeds, to the brink of the river murmuring unseen.

At the path's end, at the river's brink, printed out black upon the night, stood one high bush.

"That is where I stood and threw the baby in," said August Pascal.

That morning, once more in his cell, and with Corporal Snodgrass for his only hearer, he labored again and again through the detailed story — as if he must cast out every smallest memory by the spell of spoken words.

". . . . The night of the kidnapping I came from near Germantown on the trolley. I stood on the bank opposite the house and watched the father and mother come and stand by the baby's bed. All the curtains were up. Then I saw them go into their

room and go to bed. I lay in a cornfield near the house, waiting for them to get quiet. I went to sleep. When I waked up, the house was all dark. I crept over to the new place, got the ladder and coat. Then I climbed the ladder and looked in — and made sure of all inside. I got the baby — slipped him very gently out from under the sheet — He was very easy to lift — He was asleep — My God! I *did n't* mean to kill that baby — but he made a little cry. . . . I sat down on the edge of the river with the baby on my knees — holding him in the coat. . . . I did n't know what to do. . . . I held the baby as long as I dared, trying to think. It began to get daylight. . . . I did n't want to put him in the ground . . . did n't want the earth to touch him . . . the cold ground . . . the earth. . . . So I got the rail and the cord and I stripped the nightdress off — and burned the nightdress there by the track — then wound the cord around him, and tied him neck and foot to the rail — (How I hated that!) — and — I threw him in — Oh, this must be fierce for Mr. Coughlin!"

Said Snodgrass:

"You should have thought of that before."

"Well," querulously, "but what is a fellow to do? I wanted money. I had to have money, did n't I? I have scarcely ever worked in my life. I only meant to keep the baby till I got the few dollars. God knows I never meant to kill the child. I did n't *want* to kill him. He was a fine child. *But what was I to do?*"

Exactly in the spot that Pascal had indicated — right there, in the river, within five or six feet of the

bank, the diver found all that was left to find — the rail with the cord tied at either end. There it lay on the soft bottom, where it had lain since June 2, while the moving waters of the Schuylkill, performing their natural action, dissolved all that had been human shape.

They could not indict him for first degree murder, because, at the time of the enactment of the law declaring murder in connection with a felony murder in the first degree — the year 1865 — kidnapping had not yet become a felony. But they indicted him for second degree murder, kidnapping, burglary, and extortion.

On November 17th, brought before Judge A. S. Swartz for a trial that, because of bare necessary formality, lasted perhaps two hours, he pleaded guilty.

On November 20th, Judge Swartz gave August Pascal twenty years in prison for second degree murder, and life imprisonment for kidnapping, openly lamenting the freak of law that forbade the extreme penalty.

And — is it strange? Pascal lamented it too.

"I want to be electrocuted," he complained.

"Because," said Gearhart, "simply because he is jail-wise. He knows that his life in prison will be made by his fellow-prisoners a curse to him. Even the most confirmed black-leg revolts from a baby-killer."

"Is Pascal a degenerate?" was sometimes asked.

"Yes," says Captain Gearhart, "in the sense that any one with a perverted mind is so. He is of the calibre that could kill a man to-night in cold blood, next morning eat his breakfast with relish, and never

think of the affair again. But he is exceedingly intelligent — one of the cleverest and sharpest criminals that ever confronted us.

"Among countless evidences of his shrewdness, take his latter choice of means for the delivery of the ransom: In both cases he selects limited express trains, making no stop between two distant points — Philadelphia to Baltimore, Camden to Atlantic City. Over such stretches, he knew, it would be impossible to plant men to wait in the manner that is ordinary in cases of blackmail.

"Or again, take his choosing for a victim a man of modest means, instead of a multimillionaire. No dullard would have perceived the fact that a man with millions can hire thousands to fight him; whereas a man having fifty or a hundred thousand dollars for all his fortune will stake what he has on a single chance, and then be helpless — having shot his bolt."

Pascal, while awaiting trial, wrote for Captain Gearhart a sketch of his own life. He was born in 1884 in the mountains of Italy, near the French border. His mother was French — a circumstance, by the way, that may account for two phenomena, his undoubted sensibility, however theoretical, to the sight of mothers' suffering, and the pang of horror that certainly moved him whenever his mind was forced to touch upon the face of the dead baby, pressed against his breast.

But his history, as he wrote it, was the sordid, aimless history of a life guided by clever, tricky brains without moral balance, without ideals of any clean sort. He came to America at the age of seven-

teen, a young scalawag, vain of his roguery. At twenty-three, he married a French girl, of whom he lost sight forever during one of his terms in jail. She became personal maid to some New York woman, while he himself served briefly as butler in several well-to-do private households in the intervals of "doing time."

Now, in writing this narrative, no attempt whatever has been made to give it literary balance or form. The only object has been to tell the truth of the main thread of things as they happened, in a matter concerning us all. And this must explain the presenting of a mass of detail that, otherwise, had surely been too great.

Mr. and Mrs. Coughlin have been willing, even desirous, that the story be told, solely as an act of humanity, in the hope that others, knowing of the inferno through which they have passed, may, in need, find a better way.

Nothing, in their case, could have brought them back their baby son after the moment of his removal from their house. The little life had fled. But — and of this their experience left no doubt — had they appealed directly and at once to the Department of State Police, they would have escaped the months of devilish torment through which they actually passed.

Unity of command, on the one hand, *esprit de corps*, on the other, gave, in the work of the State Police, absolute coöperation in place of that rivalry that the employment of various and unrelated elements may invite.

Unity of command and *esprit de corps* ensured that close council, that immunity from leakage, that absolute secrecy of movement, that only a true State Police, clean and untrammelled by politics, can afford on any large scale.

Unity of command, again, set the entire State Policy body, with all its rich resources, all over the great Commonwealth, to working as one mind on this job.

One hundred and ten highly trained men — the fittest men in the world for the task — at briefest notice, and without the slightest breath of publicity, concentrated at one spot. Tens of thousands of miles, travelled on the instant of need, in any and every direction, by past-masters of the special errand in hand. Scores of would-be blackmailers ferreted out, stopped and punished. Absolute respect, delicacy, consideration, shown in every contact with the family in distress. And final complete success, carrying with it law upheld, public peace secured. All this did it mean to the Coughlins and to the country, to place the cause in the hands of the Pennsylvania State Police.

No money could have bought such succor.

And the services of the Pennsylvania State Police Force cost the Coughlins not one cent.

Such is the service that every State claiming authority to promulgate laws should, in justice and in honor, freely and equally afford to all those who live subject to the laws that it makes.

Recorder's Note: All names, whether of persons or of places, given in this narrative, are the actual names in the case. All dates are accurate.

II

BETWEEN TWO DAYS

Down in the County of Franklin, close to the Maryland border, some one forgetting God's radiant hills had murdered a man in their presence. The deed was cunning and hidden with skill. Its secret mocked the county officers, defied the resources of the District Attorney, tainted the honor of the Law. So they called for help where they always call — called to the "Black Hussars."[1]

The "Black Hussars" were very few, as matched to the work laid upon them — two hundred and twenty-eight men, counting their smiths and saddlers. But every inch of every man of them tells for action, and in so far as their arm can reach there lie the safest homes in the Union.

Now they were scattered all over the rural State in twos and threes, and little squads, wherever had risen the people's cry: "Come over quickly and help us." The Department had stripped itself almost bare. It had lent a hand and still a hand when further lending seemed impossible; but yet it made shift for this one call more — spared one last man to succor the county of Franklin. That one was Davies, Davies, of "C" Troop, Pennsylvania State Police.

[1] "Black Hussars" was an epithet in early days bestowed on The Force by those who found its skill inconvenient.

It was late at night, the night of a hard day linked to a chain of days full to the brim with tax upon mind and body. But Davies had solved his mystery, had found the guilty one, had shaped his case, and had done it all with the speed and finish that The Force demands. So that the whole town rang with the credit of it, the county paper called him "our popular hero," and even the Bench had a word of praise — the same Bench that a little later silenced a hostile cross-examiner with the sharp reminder:

"An officer of the State Police is not on trial in this court, sir."

Now, an hour after midnight, in his dim little room in the county town hotel, Davies, weary, was going to bed. He had already stripped off his coat[1] and his collar, and stood mechanically winding his watch, with an eye fixed on his pillow — when the next thing turned up:

A sudden splatter of feet in the corridor, a wheeze and a thump at the threshold, and, "Mr. Davies, Mr. Davies, suh! Open de do', quick!"

The negro porter panted without, rolling big eyes under the red light of the fire-escape — "Mr. Davies, suh, please, suh, the Sheriff he says will you-all come downstairs? Dere's been another killing, yas, suh, and de Sheriff he need you bad!"

The Sheriff was frantic. News had come that, only an hour before, two mountain "bad men," the Neill brothers, descending into the town of Waynesboro from the high-perched hamlet of Glen

[1] Corporal Davies had been working in plain clothes as the nature of the case demanded.

Furney, had crowned an evening's riot by the murder of Constable Daywalt, of the Waynesboro Police.

The Neill brothers, Abe and Bill, lived as a curse incarnate. Their criminal record in the County Court was as long and very nearly as bad as men could make it. They were typical examples of that strange type which, unseen and unsuspected by the world at large, pervades the lovely mountain regions of Pennsylvania just as it breeds and welters in the unvisited hills east and west of the Hudson, in the State of New York. They desecrated the sunshine, they made night horrible, they terrified the countryside in their play — and they brought children into the world between whom and the world was set a squalid and hateful enmity.

In the minds of this unclean pair had long existed a pricking grudge against Constable Daywalt. A brave and conscientious man, Daywalt had never hesitated to do his best against them whenever duty led that way. Many times they had sworn vengeance upon him. Now that they had wound themselves up to the point of action, they had even taken the elaborate pleasure of buying a special revolver to be christened in his blood. When their red spirit told them that the hour had struck, openly armed with the weapon and with their common array of guns and knives beside, they had swaggered into the town of Waynesboro.

All the afternoon and evening they spent in the large attempt to get thoroughly drunk. But they succeeded, despite an extraordinary and various persistence, only in becoming noisy. And Constable

Daywalt had gone to church, which both delayed and vexed them.

Not to lose him, they followed thither till the very emptiness of the street in that unfamiliar part, its deep shadows and its stillness, awed and halted them. So they hung back among the shadows, ugly, waiting.

At last the church doors swung open. Light streamed out. People, talking quietly, descended into the street. Among them, Daywalt.

A howl of evil language met him. He started toward the offenders, who fell back into a dark alley, emptying their revolvers at close range. Daywalt, unhurt, then called for help, and the Chief of Police, Staley, hurried to his support.

In a running fight the two pursued the Neills out of town — thereby drawing from them a fire that badly wounded one little girl and sent all wayfarers flat into the ditches seeking cover. Finally, the miscreants passed town limits, and with that, of course, ended the power of the Town Police.

But the officers' blood was up. Daywalt ran for a warrant, and, because of the hour, got it with less than the usual delay. Then he found a vehicle of sorts, and, picking up Chief Staley, started at full speed on a side cut to the mountain road. Striking the road at a distance from town greater than pedestrians could have covered in the interval, the two men dismounted, turned back on foot, looking for their men.

Suddenly they sighted them — grey shapes among the grey night shadows, slouching ahead with the

long mountain stride. At the same moment these two recognized their pursuers, fired, and vaulted the roadside fence into a field of stubble corn.

Daywalt was a lighter man than his superior. He tossed his coat to Staley, threw aside his cap, and with the Chief's gun in his left hand and his own in his right, cleared the fence at a jump, starting across lots after the fugitives.

Abe Neill, always running, turned and fired — fired again — again — again, and Daywalt's shots replied. But night shadows are vague and confuse the eye, and hammering hearts disturb the aim.

Staley, panting in the rear, heard Bill's entreaty: "Give *me* the gun, Abe, I can hit him!"

Then Abe fired once more.

Daywalt stumbled, fell, struggled to his hands and knees, rolled over, face to the stars.

"Chief, say a prayer for me," he gasped, as Staley bent over him.

And that was all — all but the echo of a Berserk yell of triumph dying away in the chambers of the sky.

Chief Staley kept his good wits about him. Without the avoidable loss of a moment he telephoned the Sheriff at the county seat. And the Sheriff at the county seat, roused from the best of his night's sleep, slid into his clothes, ran to the hotel, and threw the night porter at Corporal Davies's door.

"Will you help me?" he begged. "I need you bad."

Davies was the gladder to help because he knew the Sheriff himself for one who would "go to the end

of the trail" with any good man needing aid. So Sheriff Walker in his big car, with Davies by his side, flew over the road to Waynesboro, thirty miles in the dark.

A moment with Staley gave them all they needed to know.

"You must block all roads. They are surely on their way out," urged the general voice.

"We shall find those men in or near their own homes, I believe," observed Davies; "Sheriff, will you try it?"

Back into the machine they jumped, with a Waynesboro man to guide, and dashed away toward the mountains.

"The Neills have three cabins," the guide explained, as from time to time he could insert a word between concussions with the roadbed — "three cabins about three hundred feet apart — in a little settlement — right in the forest — Bill Neill has a wife and that's all. Abe's got a wife and two little kids — real little ones."

"Better stop the machine about half a mile this side," said Davies. "We can do the rest afoot."

Feeling their way up the rough mountain path, more trail than road, rock-encumbered and shaggy with weeds and brush, the men presently caught a gleam of lamplight from a high clearing.

"Blessed if they are n't all lit up!" exclaimed the Sheriff, peering through parted bushes. "And at two o'clock in the morning! Let's go around to the back."

The two men skirted the cabin softly. Again light, streaming through glass panels in the upper half of

the door. Davies, using the butt of his revolver, rapped on the glass sharply.

"Come out here, Abe and Bill," he called, "we want you!"

Scarcely were the words uttered when a volley of shots split the silence, coming from the woods behind. Two bullets drove straight through the door and into the cabin itself, one passing within a hand's breadth of Davies's head, the second scarcely farther from the Sheriff's breast. The hidden marksmen were pumping away with rifles, from their cover in the forest, directing such a fire upon the frail shelter of their own women and children as soldiers might direct upon an enemy trench. The two officers drew away into the dark, counselling together.

"We can't do anything alone," whispered the Sheriff. "I'll go back to Waynesboro and raise a posse."

"All right," Davies whispered back. "Meantime I'll rustle around this hillside, among the neighbors, and see what help I can find. It's possible" — and he grinned to himself in the blackness — "that our brethren in the woods are not overburdened with friends."

Just before leaving the car, on the road below, Davies's alert eye had marked a house with a telephone. Running back to that house now, he called up every connection within feasible distance. The response justified his surmise. Thirty men shouted over the wire that they would come as fast as their means could carry them. But they lacked guns.

"Jacob Sprenkle has guns. He rents 'em to deer-hunters," some one suggested.

"All right," said Davies. "We'll meet at Sprenkle's." And with that was gone.

"Will I lend my guns?" exclaimed Sprenkle. "*Will* I! Let me tell you what those fellers did to me — just *one* thing, while I get these rifles out of the racks.

"I was out on my steps one Sunday afternoon, when Abe and Bill came along, drunk and quarrelling, and settled down to wrangle and swear on my grass.

"'Boys,' I said, 'don't you see my little daughter there? If you've got to use language like that, go where the child can't hear you.'

"Well, I had an orchard of young fruit trees there and they were just ready to bear. *That night every one of 'em was cut off.* Except one big, fine tree; they put dynamite in that and blew it to bits.

"Here's all the guns I've got and all the ammunition too — and I'm coming along myself to help you if it's the last act I ever do in the world. We've been afraid of those boys all our lives."

The valley farmers, gathering quickly, came with a will for the work. This one had helplessly watched the Neills, in broad daylight, drive into his potato field when the crop was dug, load up their wagon and drive away, safe in the knowledge that the terror of their name rendered all things possible. That one had lost his steers by the same cavalier method. Not a man of the lot lacked his solid incentive to action, and the way they eyed the guns put into their hands in itself told a history.

But not all of them understood their weapons. So Davies explained their mechanism and use. And

then he went farther. Moved by that deep-reaching sense of responsibility that is the second nature of The Force, he told each man, very clearly, just exactly how and when he might lawfully shoot and just exactly how to take a prisoner.

Then he led his thirty rifles up the hill where the light still shone down the night.

Three hundred yards apart, encircling the cabin, he stationed them in the cover of the wood.

"Lie low till daylight," whispered Davies, "and whatever happens, *don't let them get through.* If you do, they are off for a couple of years again."

The Sheriff came up with six carloads of men. These he strung through the lower woods and along the road, watching. Watching, watching, through the still blackness — hour by hour — in vain. Not a sound but the little breathings of the woods. Ears ached with harking to fitful nothings. Then, out of the first grey arose, in an instant, a nerve-splitting rattle of shots.

Davies, springing from his cover, ran like an Indian tracking the alarm, only to come, half a mile away, upon a knot of nettled and embarrassed men mumbling epithets at each other as a cloak for their own self-loathing.

"They broke through — the two of them," chorused the disgraced, suddenly banding together for defence. "They shot at us first!"

Davies considered, very briefly. Then he called in his men and divided them into two parties.

"Half of you," said he, "circle around over the mountain. With the other half I will search those

cabins. Then we'll start up the Beartown road and swing back on the Sheriff's line."

They searched the cabins, from floor to roof-tree. But they found therein only two scared women, a baby and a little tow-headed boy.

"I hope you *do* ketch Pop!" volunteered this latter, standing at ease with his bare brown legs astride. "My Pop's Abe Neill. He killed a man and he *oughter* be hung. And, besides, when Pop *is* hung, this house will be mine!"

The posse hurried on, to farther fields. Several automobiles belonged in the party; the men piled thick on seat and running-board, and sped away.

It was perhaps two miles from the cabins that Davies's car first sighted an approaching buggy, drawn by a good horse. As the car rushed past, he saw that the buggy had but one occupant, a woman.

"Who was that?" he asked his neighbor.

"Don't know."

"Why," called Jacob Sprenkle, from the tonneau, "that was Rosie Neill, the Neill boys' sister."

"Slow up," said Davies, "Mr. Sprenkle will take command of the posse and proceed as planned. I must go back with the girl."

Open-mouthed the men gazed after him, as he ran back up the road — as he overtook the buggy and jumped into the seat at the girl's side.

"Well, I'll be switched!" murmured Sprenkle — "But all aboard, you fellers. Orders are orders and I reckon that young lad knows what he's about."

Davies was looking down into the girl's eyes — vivid eyes in a face so comely that the first glimpse of

it fairly stopped your breath. But the eyes were as full of fierce defiance as the eyes of a tiger-cat at bay.

"Don't you touch me!" she hissed through her set teeth.

"No," said Davies quietly, "but I must drive with you. State's business. State Police."

"How dare you get into my buggy!"

"It is my buggy, just now — and the horse is my horse, and you are my prisoner, I am sorry to tell you. Drive on home."

The reins hung loose in her lax brown hand — a little hand, with slender fingers and pretty nails. The horse dropped into a walk, grooves of sweat sticking dark down his unkempt rump. The first clear lights of morning were coming now. The air was sharp and strong. The wooded mountain-side, rising sheer from the road on the left, breathed out the perfumes of dry leaves and scented pines. To the right, off below, stretched fields, fields, empty fields, russet-golden, dappled-brown.

Silence in the buggy, while the horse climbed on. Then the road, a mere scratch on the shoulder of the mountain, shifted over the mountain's shoulder, to reveal new fields, russet-golden and dappled-brown, stretching down away, away and away. And out on that bare plain, perhaps a mile and a half distant — one could see so clearly from the mountain shoulder! — two men were walking, headed for the hills.

The sun cast slanting shafts upon them — threw long shadows at their feet. And the shafts flashed back in sharp white light from the barrels of their

rifles and showed the heavy side arms that they bore. They slouched ahead with the long mountain stride. And one was short and one was tall. From the high cliff shoulder in the bright morning light it was all so very clear!

Davies's eyes rested on the girl. Neither spoke. Not by a shade did her expression change. Impossible to guess, from her face, whether she had or had not seen the men. Perhaps they were merely belated farmers going to join the posse.

But the Neills' description ran that one was short and one was tall. And the little brown hand on the reins was shifting its grip.

Davies said nothing until a cover of pine for a moment shut off the view. Then he spoke:

"Never run your horse up hill."

"You mind your business!"

"Slow down."

Once more the pace dropped to a walk. Again the plain opened and the two men came into view. They were moving diagonally, toward Glen Furney, and the distance was lessening fast. Evidently, now, they saw the buggy, too.

Suddenly the girl gave her horse a cut that sent him ahead with a jump. Davies leaned over and looked into her face.

"I'll drive this horse as I please," she snarled.

"Shall I drive for you?" Davies's hand reached toward the reins.

For an instant they looked square into each other's eyes.

Then the horse slowed down.

Close and closer the two lines of approach converged — that of the men crossing the fields and that of the vehicle climbing the rough mountain road. Again and again Davies checked the progress of the horse.

And now he became aware of another presence. Another person was near them — with them; had been with them he knew not how long; was watching them with a desperate intensity that missed neither word nor motion.

Stealing soundless as a shadow through the veil of the roadside brush, a little old woman, clad in dim homespun, was keeping abreast of the horse. She was thin and wiry, nimble as a squirrel. Her brown and withered face was the face of a haunted ghost and her eyes burned in her head.

Whenever Davies looked at her, she faded into the cover — withdrew and was softly absorbed in the semi-translucent shades. But still he felt her eyes, and knew that they left him only to follow those figures now quitting the plain for the wooded trail.

Yet a few moments — and the cards fell as Davies had planned. Striking the home clearing, the buggy, crossing it, stopped before the cabin door just as the men of the brown fields burst through the underbrush on the other side and stood at gaze.

"Rosie," said Davies gently, "I think those two are your brothers. If you will call to them to come over here, maybe I can arrest them without doing them any hurt."

Said the girl, "You can arrest them and be damned."

"Are they your brothers?"

"I don't know them at all."

For a second Davies hesitated. There was a risk — he was not certain — not quite certain — and then, suddenly, as he weighed it, again he saw the wraith-woman — the presence in the woods.

She was straining for his notice now. One arm clutched the tree that half-concealed her. With the other, extended, she pointed out the men. Her hand shook like a leaf in the wind and her eyes blazed:

"That's them! That's the Neill boys," she whispered, with piercing vehemence.

Then, as though all her work in the world were finished and done, she flung herself down on her knees, with a high, thin wail:

"O God, God, remember my girl! *Don't* let them get away from You now!" . . .

"Rosie, once more, will you help me?" It was the single chance to save life.

"I won't help you," breathed Rosie, slowly, magnificent in her steely rage.

Out from the cabin door the two wives came huddling — poor, flat, dull things, one clutching a whining baby, while the barelegged boy, curious, cynical, only a little scared, clung to their skirts. They were straight in range, should Davies be the mark of fire from their men.

But they of The Force think of these things also, and think fast. Davies ran aside at a tangent, till the women were safe. Then he called across the clearing:

"I am an officer of the State Police. Give yourselves up."

Abe Neill flung his rifle to his shoulder, training the sights on the Trooper's heart. Bill aimed his revolver at arm's length, and Bill was the best shot in all that county. They were backing toward the shelter of a shed, once behind which they could have fired at will.

With an oath, Abe shouted:

"Come get us if you want us. I'll give myself up to nobody on earth!"

Davies raised his rifle. There were only three shots in it, but he alone knew that. And he expected to need two, at most. Abe's trigger finger bent. Davies fired. The mountaineer lurched, staggered, collapsed where he stood, his weapon dropping from his hand.

But Bill, who had meant to fire — who had all the will in the world to take life with one sure shot, still hung uncertain, scowling, shifting, fumbling with his gun.

"Throw — her — *down!*"

Life or death rang in the Trooper's tone.

Down went Bill's guns, rifle and revolvers clattering in a heap.

Davies walked over to the wounded man. The heavy deer-bullet had torn through his side. As a regular army campaigner first aid was firm ground to Davies. As a State Police Officer the skilful service of those in need was his office in life. But there lurched Bill, white and lowering, very close to the weapons. And more than one good man on The Force has been shot when bending to help the hurt.

So Davies, taking thought, stopped first to unload the guns.

Then, showing Bill how to lift most gently, with such awkward aid he carried the helpless man into the house.

The wives sat speechless, inactive, dull. They moaned a little, but not much. How should they greatly care, after all! Beatings, starvation, curses, neglect, had made their lives. Scarcely six hours before, this hut had been riddled with bullets wantonly fired by their husbands' hands, and if chick or child were now breathing, that was a miracle with which their men had naught to do.

It was all in their day, besides. How should they care!

But Rosie, standing apart, looked on with the air of an outraged queen. Her chin was high, her eyes flinty. She made never a move toward her prostrate brother. It was no concern for him that turned her heart bitter within. Her whole possessing wrath was for a wider thing — the invasion of the freedom of the hills. She would have liked to wear a face unyielding as steel, but she was a child in years yet and the nerves about her lips would still betray her.

"Rosie," said Davies, "go down to the house with the telephone. Ask them to call up every doctor within reach. Get a doctor here flying. It is a question of your brother's life."

The girl did not refuse. Presently she returned from the errand.

"Two doctors are on the way," she reported. "Now I'm going down off this mountain. *And while you stay I don't come back!*"

With scarcely a glance at the figure moaning on the bed, but returning Davies's quizzical smile with an unflinching, defiant stare, she wheeled and was gone.

Davies had already boiled water, sterilized cloths, washed out the wound and bandaged it. Now he sat with the dying man, doing what might be done. Bill hovered helplessly, hither and yon, like a thing lost in the dark, tamed not merely by the presence of that Death that he had so often dealt and scoffed at, but by the presence of another Power, to him far stranger and more terrible — before which his hand lost its cunning and his mind its nerve. He could no more bluff and swagger; he had no thought to try to run. He had met something bigger than his world had dreamed of; not so much seen it with his human eyes as felt it in his plastic heart. If he had known it well, and long ago, it might by daily checking so have changed his vagrant will as to make the semblance of a man of him.

But there were only two hundred and twenty-eight of the "Black Hussars," including their smiths and saddlers, and the State of Pennsylvania is large. So Abe lay dying there, and Bill was going up for twenty years. To neither of them had it been granted, until too late, to know the Law Incarnate.

By and by came the Sheriff with the posse, handcuffed Bill, and took possession of the last few moments of him who was going a journey.

Then Corporal Davies, "C" Troop, State Police, released from nursing and watching, rushed back to the county seat for a wash, a bite to eat, and the real

business of the morning. He must get to work at it now in dead earnest, for he had spent a lot of precious time on this little side incident — nine whole hours.

Recorder's Note: In this narrative, the sole departure from fact is in the name Neill. Abe and Bill ——'s children need not be branded by name with their fathers' record.

III

"QUICK AS GOD WILL LET YOU"

Of all the counties of Pennsylvania none is more beautiful than Wyoming. But the aspects of that radiant State are manifold in loveliness. While Lancaster spreads broad, teeming fields wide-breasted to the sun, while Butler's staccato ridges crowd like storm-waves on the sky, Wyoming rolls slowly on in great, grave, sombre valleys — valleys bulwarked by titanic shoulders, stooped and heavy, infinitely lonely, infinitely solemn, against an unknown world.

For Wyoming is sparsely tenanted as to humankind. Wyoming is "poor." Its towns are few and very small. Uncultivated brush covers its greater part. Yet, here and there again, at remote intervals, brush gives place to island-like old farms. And among the farmer people persists certain old foundation stock, firm and sound and wholesome, despite its separation from mankind.

The story now to follow is absolutely true. But the names of the family concerned, like that of their actual abode, are changed, because of young lives coming up, across whose path should lie no cloud.

The village, then, shall be called Surrey — although only as a manner of speaking can it be called "village" at all. For it consists of four buildings — a little white general store, its dependent feed-room, the blacksmith's house, and the smithy. These four

stand at the corners of a rough crossroad, whose vistas close in woods.

Down below, on the slope of the valley, half-hidden by a few ancient apple trees, clings one little old farmhouse, sound and weather-tight still, yet nevertheless in some mysterious way breathing out the fact that it has sunken upon grey days. A cluster of slant and mossy gravestones flanks it upon one side. For the rest, its sole companions are the everlasting hills, sweeping up and up, bare, solemn, even, bastion-like, to meet the solemn sky.

In this lonely house lived, twelve years ago, a family called Burnham — the father, the mother, and their only daughter, June. Solid farmer-kind, they hugged, contented, the acres from which generations of their forbears had drawn a decent livelihood. And the land and their labor gave them, still, enough for all their needs. Simple, honorable, self-respecting, rugged, hard-working, independent, kindly, Burnham and his wife asked of the world nothing more than it gave them. And the joy and pride of their lives, the core of their hearts, was June, then a fine, comely, pleasant girl in the early twenties.

June, beaming with sturdy health and cheeriness, pink-cheeked, broad-shouldered, bright-eyed, yellow-haired, good all through, had a suitor or two or three, drawn like bees by hidden sweetness. Of whom the one who pleased her best was Joe Lasalle. Now, Joe Lasalle, a tall, keen-faced, darkly handsome type, had no roots in the ken of Wyoming — no roots anywhere that any one knew; but had recently dropped out of clear space when his mother, a

stranger also, came to occupy a tiny farmhouse high in the hills.

That farmhouse, as the crow flies three miles or so from Surrey, abides in a loneliness like the loneliness of the sea. And the woman who sought it was said by the few who saw her to wear a harsh, fierce, forbidding face that killed any word of friendship before it could pass one's lips.

Yet Joe, when he appeared, had a way with him. And he took that way down into the valley. And it led straight into June Burnham's big, brave, honest heart.

But Burnham and his wife, simple, unworldly folk, could not warm to Joe Lasalle, and the sight of his progress with June filled them with dread.

He was the son of an outlandish woman — strayed, it was said, from some distant lumber-camp; obviously not of their blood and tradition — a woman of a past unknown, yet whose history, seemingly, stood written on her face in a language as ugly as it was strange. Who and what was his father? As for himself, they did not, could not like him. Something alien, something disquieting, nameless, blocked the way. They spoke to each other of it, yet rarely, with restraint, locking it for the most part in their own secret place.

Because, each one of them, they loved their daughter more than life itself. And if she should fix her heart, then they would hold with her, in all the wisdom that they could achieve. Meantime, even to each other, they would give voice as little as possible to their fear, lest words cast the fear in definite shape and make a hard task harder.

So June Burnham married Joe Lasalle. And the pair went to live as lessees on a farm some miles apart — Joe to work the land. What else should he do?

But Joe developed no fancy for farming. And any fox has a keener sense of marital duty. So that before their first child was a year old, Burnham saw that June and her baby would be hungry and cold if he did not take them home.

"Mother," he said, on the night when the thing became clear to him, "I am going to ask June and Joe to come back."

"George Burnham, are you crazy?" cried the mother. "You know how I want our girl and her baby back — back where we can do for her. But Joe Lasalle — why should *he* darken this house?"

"Is it for us, or for June, that we'd be doing it?" asked the old man. "Is it good for a wife to leave her husband, or for children to be strangers to their father? Our people have never done such things — neither yours nor mine. Perhaps Joe will improve. Anyway, it is June and the baby we must think of. Yes, yes, mother — there — there! Never mind, never mind, I knew you would come round."

So June returned. And Burnham cared for her needs, and for those of her children as they came. But Joe, while he hung about the old place off and on, living there in the main, making use of it as suited his convenience, gave little help in the work of the farm and contributed nothing to his growing family's maintenance.

Meantime, the whole thing increasingly bored him. So that when some one, strangely inspired, offered

him a job with a telephone line, carrying pay of one hundred dollars a month with expenses, and involving fairly constant travel about the State, he jumped for the widened horizon; and, so jumping, finally ditched all domesticity.

After that came our entrance into the World War — came the draft. And Joe Lasalle, drafted, stood up in his six feet of young good looks and claimed exemption from his country's service. Grounds: Family duties, and the "fifty dollars a month it costs him to keep the children." Exemption granted.

Later, old Burnham died. Then it became definitely necessary for June to take the step she hated — to ask the Court to compel her husband to help her buy the children's food.

Fifty dollars a month, the Court awarded, fixing the figure by the record of the exemption plea.

In the interval Joe had discovered, at a barn dance adorning his path, a very handsome young girl — call her Nora. From that time he cut off all communication with his wife. And Nora became the companion of his travels. Nora wore pretty clothes, which he bought for her. Nora and he disported together gaily and comfortably, under the "and expenses" clause — gaily, and comfortably, and gaily — until the telephone company woke up. Which let Joe drop, with a thud, to a poor little twenty-five-dollar-a-week job in a Wilkes-Barre garage — twenty-five a week and no extras.

Now, twenty-five dollars a week and no extras will scarcely stretch to a man's own keep and comfort, a Nora, *and* fifty dollars a month for anybody. Of these

three ideas, therefore, one, clearly, must go. In the choice, no Joe could hesitate.

So came October, 1919; June Lasalle and her old widowed mother alone in the lonely hills; the four children, of whom the youngest was then nine months old, their common care; the Court's award of fifty dollars a month, haltingly paid though it was, a desperately important item in the survival of the household. On the other hand, Joe Lasalle, down below in Wilkes-Barre, weak, vain, wild, undisciplined, chafing himself mad in the break between desire and means, rapidly developing an obsession of hatred against the woman who seemed to stand in his road to happiness.

Not since finding Nora had Joe visited his wife. Yet, from time to time, a curious gnawing compulsion had driven him to seek her out — just to see — just to see how she moved from hour to hour, to see who came about the place, to see if her habits had changed in any way, to see what *could* be safely done — if a man — made up — his mind — *if* —

Sometimes the two women heard him, felt him, without knowing what they heard or felt. Some sound of moving, by night, some sort of thickening of the darkness at the door. Once he crept into the cellar to listen, and the grit of his foot as it slipped upon the stair and the hiss of the one heavy breath that he drew almost betrayed him.

"Mother!" he heard a whisper — "Some one is in the cellar — right there!"

"I heard it. I'm going down to look" — the pushing back of a chair — a step.

"Mother, *mother!*" This time aloud, "Not for a thousand dollars! You *shan't* go!" And he knew as he stole away that June had flung herself upon the older woman and was holding her fast.

Again and again shapeless alarms, blind awarenesses of evil at hand, sped from his obsessing thought, from his lurking, unseen presence, into the two women's minds.

Rarely did so much as the creak of a board or the snap of a twig underfoot follow his tread, for Joe, hunter by instinct and practice, a crack shot and trailer of game, could move like a snake in silence.

Yet again and again did Jack, the old Newfoundland dog who had loved June singly since she was a little maiden and he a ball of fluff, again and again did old Jack rise uneasily, with a growl in his throat. And again and again did June, in an access of half-terror, half-desperate revolt, fling open the door, expecting to see upon the threshold she scarcely knew what shape of menace. But only the night — the huge, blank, empty night — would meet her staring eyes.

Then came a midnight when, lying with her baby in her arm, she awakened as at a clutch upon her heart, and, in the tense still instant that followed, knew with a knowledge apart from conscious sense that an enemy stood close at hand.

Who? What did he want? *What?*

The dog came and nudged her with his cold nose — laid a heavy paw upon her — whining.

Drawing her arm from under the sleeping child, she crept out to the kitchen and took Joe's old shot-

gun from its place in the corner. Loaded it. Sat, facing the door, with the gun across her knees, waiting, until dawn — until broad light.

After that Mrs. Burnham fell sick with a heavy cold — a sort of grippe — that tied her for days to her bed. And it was while she lay yet ill that a little stir arose, one night, among the cattle in the barn. Both women heard it, listened with trained, appraising ears. Then, without a word, June arose, took her lantern and went out, followed close by Jack, hackles up, teeth gleaming.

The sick woman caught her own black fear in her two hands and throttled it till the other's increasing footfall and the reclosing of the kitchen door announced her safe return.

June came and stood by her mother's bed. "I thought it might be that the calf had got loose. But it was n't — Mother, are you afraid to stay alone while I take my baby and go over after Arthur?"

Now Arthur Burnham, June's elder brother, not to protect the women but in pursuit of his own affairs, had come to live in a cottage five minutes distant by a short-cut through field and woods.

"You are a crazy girl," answered the old woman from her pillow. "But go if you must. It's as bad to stay as to go, or to go as to stay."

Arthur returned with his sister, to spend an hour laughing at their fears.

"Mother, you're nervous," he argued. "Who'd want to bother you poor harmless folks, now, say!"

"Arthur Burnham" — and the firm, fine old face on the pillow gave double force to the spoken word —

"Arthur Burnham, your mother is no coward and no fool. I tell you again as I've told you before, evil hangs over this place and your sister and her children and me. And it comes nearer — *nearer*. Now I ask you, as I've asked you before: Will you speak to the State Police? What are they for if not to protect lonely women and children? It's what they never refuse to do. But how can they know we need them if they are not told? As you said yourself, nobody'd think any one *could* wish harm to us."

But Arthur laughed again, indulgently. "You and June have got yourself all fussed up. There ain't nobody wants to bother you. I'll come over some night and sleep here myself just to show you it's only your nerves."

He knew that a barracks of State Police lay over the hill somewhere — not very far away. But he knew that fact as most of us know most things outside our daily round — vaguely and without application, either going or coming, to our own concerns.

So he laughed. And the cloud swung low.

One afternoon June sat by her mother's bed, her big work-basket on her knees, patching the children's clothes. George, the eldest, an eager, active, handsome boy, and little June and Jenny, yellow-haired, blue-eyed, happy reproductions of their mother, went through garments like mice through standing grass. Even Baby Edith, fourth wearer of the things that covered her, managed only too often to kick a hole in a skirt or to put her chubby elbow through a sleeve. And June took great pride and infinite pains in the neatness of her children.

For some time she had worked in silence, while the invalid silently watched her, dull of heart. Then she spoke — words, simply uttered without particularity or shaken calm:

"Mother," she said, "something tells me that I ought to go up to the hill cemetery and buy me a lot."

"What?" gasped the mother, stricken cold. "What do you want of that, girl? Have n't we got our lot, right here?"

"I have a feeling — I want to be up out of this — when the time comes — up high in the sun — and to bury my children beside me. Something tells me to go get the place now."

Nothing of wailing, nothing of terror in the speech. Only level, established thought.

The old woman snatched the sheet across her mouth. Not a sign of panic had she given yet. Not the tribute of one quivering muscle would she render, to man or ghost. June came of stanch stock, never in her mother should she find a weight to carry — a fanner of fear.

Next evening — that was Tuesday, October 7, 1919 — the old dog Jack refused his supper. On the following morning, as they opened the house door, he slunk away into the brush. Toward night Arthur appeared.

"I have bad news for you, June," he said. "Old Jack's dead. I found him over in the north woods."

June, white to her white lips, threw back her bonny head and looked him straight between the eyes. After a long moment she spoke, slowly, stilly:

"He can kill me, maybe. But he can't scare me. Some day tell him that."

"Good Lord, sis, what are you thinking of! Who? What?"

"*I* think," the mother answered, "what I've said before — that you ought to speak to the State Police — to ask them to come. Oh, Arthur, you *should.* You should do it *now.*"

But Arthur laughed again: "A pretty story I'd have to tell them! One old dog dead, and two women seein' things that ain't there to see. Do you want me to look like a fool, mother? You'd ought to have more sense."

Next day, toward noon, the mother made strength to get up. She was seventy-three years old, and the grippe had dealt her no light blow. But, in the back of her soul loomed that which drove her, as the launching of the final attack drives broken men to the guns.

"Who poisoned our Jack?" she kept asking herself. "Whose way was our Jack in — and why?"

But never a word of it passed her lips, and the trembling of her knees came from physical weakness, rather than from panic within.

A heavy rain had set in, the night before. All day it poured down. June, going to and from house to barn, caring for the cattle, doing chores indoors and out, passed before her mother's eyes a rain-drenched, mud-clogged figure of honesty and brave love. Everything about the house — the kitchen floor scrubbed spotless silver-white, the shining pans, the clean, bright stoves, the invisible window-panes, the

decent furniture, carefully kept — showed self-respecting industry. The elder children, well-mannered, obedient, affectionate, happy, did faithfully their little usual parts in the day's round. All this the old woman seemed to be seeing with a curious, sudden clearness, a sort of photography — a valuing, as if for a permanent end. After supper, weariness overcame her. She crept back to her room, lay down upon her bed and fell asleep.

It was ten o'clock when she wakened — wakened with a horrible lurch. A clutch at her shoulder. June knelt beside her.

"Mother!" she breathed. "Oh! mother — don't you hear? There's a man outside — a man stealing around the house — *Mother!*"

The wail in that last word will ring in the mother's ears as long as she walks this earth. Nothing new lay in the alarm itself. Not once, but many a time, in the last month, had each of them known in her inner mind that some human presence lurked about, unseen. But never before had June permitted one tremor to echo the fact. Now her voice choked and her hand struck icy cold. She, so strong, so undaunted, seemed suddenly like a frightened child — clung, like a little frightened child, to her mother's knees and shook with fear.

"Mamma's coming, my pretty — Mamma's coming, my own, my chick," the old woman whispered — words scarcely used since she herself was young and June a baby in her arms.

And it was she that led the way back into the kitchen — she, for the moment, that walked the steadier

of the two — all her love and instinct of protection transfused into strength to meet the need.

They went and sat by the table, according to their wont, the mother in her low chair, June facing her, the evening lamp between. Still, hardly breathing, they listened up and down the planes of sound. But nothing did they hear, save the occasional stir of a coal in the stove and the heavy rush of the rain. Presently June rose.

"I'm going to get my baby," she said; "somehow I seem to want her near."

So she brought the little, velvety, sleeping thing, laid it in its carriage and drew it close by her side. As she moved back into her seat, she had glanced at the window behind her — glanced again.

"I wish we could put shutters there. Let's do it just as soon as we can get a man."

"Shutters on the windows of this room? All right, daughter."

"This room? — All the windows? — No, I don't know. But — I can't tell why — I do want shutters to *that* window *there* -- I wish they were on to-night."

Then the other began hurriedly to talk — gentle, broken, rambling talk of June's own childhood, of her dead father's joy in her, his pride in his bonny, hardy, laughing little playmate. Of his terror, big, solid man though he was, once when she had the croup — once again when she strayed into the woods and for an hour or two was lost. Beginning with an effort, forcing the words, the speaker finally drifted with the current of her own spell — almost slipped away into the sunlit past.

June listened — or seemed to listen — silently, while the kind old voice trailed on, borne on the hum of the rain.

Motionless she sat, one elbow on the table, her chin on her hand, staring down upon her baby's face. "Dear dad!" she whispered once or twice, and once or twice a tear stood on her cheek.

It grew late, for farmer folk—beyond reason late. Unheeded, the clock on the mantel touched eleven. And with that, It came.

Two minutes after, perhaps, little George stood in the stairway, saucer-eyed.

"What's happened? — Mother! — What was it?" he cried. "Did the house explode?"

But it was the grandmother's voice that answered, from somewhere across the room, out of his sight.

"Go back and put your pants on. Get sister June and run over to Uncle Arthur's. Tell him I want him here."

For once, the boy stopped to ask no question, but flew to obey, stumbling and scrambling on the stairs. And when the two children, hand in hand, came piping in the darkness under their uncle's window, they could tell him nothing except that an awful noise had scared them and that granny wanted him at home.

Nevertheless, and for all his old, easy scepticism, Arthur walked fast — ran — between the stubble corn-rows — through the woods.

"Where are you? What is it?" he panted as he flung open the door into the lighted room.

Then he looked straight into his mother's steady eyes.

She was on the floor, over by the table, kneeling. In her arms lay June, her head cradled in the nook of her mother's neck. On the fair planks, blood. Blood on the mother's hands, and on her thin white hair.

"What is it!" he cried again, babbling.

"Arthur Burnham, never you mind what it is. *As quick as God will let you,* YOU CALL THE STATE POLICE."

On the 10th day of October, 1919, Captain Wilson Price got his transfer from the command of "A" Troop, in the southwestern end of the State, to the command of "B" Troop, in the far northeast, at Wyoming, out of Wilkes-Barre. Reaching barracks late that evening, after a tough day's work and travel, he had just turned in and fallen asleep when Corporal Ammon shot up the stairs, three steps at a jump.

"A murder, sir, at Surrey."

Now there are certain things that no Pennsylvania State Police Captain, breath remaining in his body, leaves to any subordinate. While the Corporal's voice yet echoed in the hall, the Captain's hand grasped the telephone. It was then exactly 11.45 o'clock.

"Who's calling?" asked Price.

"Arthur Burnham. My sister's been shot. Over by Surrey."

"Who did it?"

"I don't know."

"Whom do you suspect?"

"I don't suspect anybody. — Well — her husband has n't been too good to her, maybe. But he ain't around here any more. He . . . "

Already the Captain had called for a road-map, for a trooper who knew the roads, for time-tables. Even as he questioned and listened, he was tracing routes — all routes, out from Surrey.

A fugitive, he decided at a glance, would probably make for Wilkes-Barre or for some station on one of the railroads. The first train at any available point would be due, he saw, at three o'clock in the morning, three hours and a quarter off. His first cars he therefore sped to cover every exit on those lines, with orders to drop one man at each intersection of road or byway, to stop every automobile, tram-car, or vehicle of any kind that might pass, and to search for any suspicious person, for any person answering to the description of Joe Lasalle or for any person bearing firearms.

The cars flew as he spoke, while the Captain, still at the telephone, called his substations, ordering action; called up the police of surrounding towns, requesting coöperation. Then, accompanied by Corporal Ammon with Privates Hintze and Dorn, he started, himself, for Surrey.

That little old car had already seen much wild service. Its joints had been racked and its sinews strained in many a chase where life and death hung even the balance, or where the honor of the Commonwealth stood attainted. But never in its prime had it done better work than it was to do that night. Rain had been falling long and heavily, and still the

rain slashed down — a thick, black torrent writhing with whips. The road was a slough, a river of mud. The car, ramming fair on unseen boulders, with a smash and a scrape would reel away to bury her nose in mush, then haul herself out and charge again, while the man at the wheel peered under his visor a rod ahead, and his three comrades, life centred in vision, shredded the secrets of the many-textured night.

Something over eleven miles it is from "B" Troop Barracks to the old farmhouse at Surrey. Just over eleven miles. And in exactly thirty minutes, as was later proved on the witness stand, in exactly thirty minutes from that tick of the clock at which Arthur Burnham got "B" Troop on the telephone, the Captain of "B" Troop stood in the farmhouse door.

They had lifted June, by then, and laid her on her bed. Price and his troopers found her there, lying straight and still, her work-worn hands on her breast. They noticed — noticing everything — the neatness and cleanness of the room, of her dress, the tidiness of her hair, the honor in her face, the white, smooth goodliness of the bed, her beautiful dignity in death.

In the kitchen the mother sat, a certain magnificence about her, a certain classic grandeur, like an old tribal queen in defeat. She had done absolutely everything that she should have done. Her mind, all untaught in such particulars, had risen triumphant and made clear the way. She had disturbed nothing. The chair on which June had sat, the curtain at the window, the lamp, the position of the doors, even the black pool on the floor, she had been scrupulous

to guard untouched. She had gone to the desk and hunted out a picture of Joe Lasalle. Now she sat waiting, with June's baby on her breast, June's children at her knees, hushing their frightened sobbing, her own head up, her own eyes dry and challenging, her mouth firm. Price, looking at her there, felt sheer respect.

As to the deed, in five minutes he knew all that he needed to know, as far as that scene could tell it! June's wound was three inches behind and a little below the left ear. It was two inches in diameter and three to four inches deep. She had received a full charge of number six shot from a shotgun. The shoulder of her dress was smirched with powder, and riddled with holes. Pellets of shot showed in the panels of a door across the room. The globe of the lamp was smashed. One pane of the window before which she had sat was shattered, and a hole blown through the Holland shade. Under that window, outside, lay a horizontal cellar door. On one batten of the door stuck a bit of fresh mud.

Price, standing on the cellar door, found that, peering close through the cracks in the worn Holland shade, he could distinguish objects in the room. He ordered one of his men to sit in June's chair as June had sat, elbow on table, chin in left hand. Then, with his own foot close by the mud-spot, he sighted a broomstick through the hole in the pane at his trooper's head. The sight-line struck the opposite door above the shot-marks there.

Price is a small man — a small package of high potency. He gave the stick into the second trooper's

hand. Sighted, the line struck the pellets in the door fairly. That trooper was five feet eleven inches tall. So, it happened, was Joe Lasalle.

Satisfied with his investigation of the premises, leaving Private Hintze to comfort the little household, but taking Ammon and Dorn with him, the Captain now sped off, as he had come, to snap the next link to the chain, as he guessed it. Three miles or so away, up and up, high, and higher in the hills, he lighted at last upon a tiny farmhouse abiding in loneliness like the loneliness of the sea — the house of the hard-faced stranger woman, Joe Lasalle's mother.

In a moment the three men had control of the place — of all its egresses. And while Price pursued that shrewd interrogation of the inmates that was later to clinch the case, it was Private Dorn who made the first material discovery — a twelve-gauge shotgun, freshly cleaned, hidden in a cupboard; and beside it the oily rag that had cleaned it.

"Captain . . . " he called — and at that the telephone rang.

"Answer that telephone," Price commanded the man of the household, "and be careful what you say."

"Hello," — he obeyed.

On the word, Price pushed him aside, taking the instrument from his hand.

"Is Captain Price there?" came a voice that he recognized. "Private Brennan speaking. From the Dallas-Luzerne road at Shaverton. *I have Joe Lasalle.*"

This was twenty minutes after one.

By the first light of dawn they reconstructed his trail. Independent of his statements as of his denial, they followed his hesitating movements about the house, from the time when his baleful, unseen presence had driven the wife in terror to her sick mother's bed to the moment when, braced on the cellar door, he had fired his one shot, and then, suddenly afraid, without a glance to make sure of the deed, had turned and run. They found the rail on the old fence, opposite, under the apple tree, where he had splintered a rotten board, hastily climbing to reach the short-cut through the swamp to his mother's house. On the swamp's farther edge, they found the rock that his fleeing foot had scraped — the little white chalky line and the tear in the moss. From the inmates of his mother's home, from what they had said or left unsaid, from their explanations or failure to explain, they reconstructed what had passed in that place in Joe Lasalle's brief tarrying both before and after the crime. And so they traced him till he had landed, shuddering lies in useless showers, into the arms of Privates Brennan and Gingrich, waiting at Shaverton on the Dallas-Luzerne road.

Meantime, they had found the girl, Nora, whose image had buzzed in Joe's handsome, empty head until the getting rid of his wife became a sort of obsession to him. They had found her quickly, before any alarm could reach her, had brought her in all unprepared, and, in spite of her jaunty, foolish defiance, had got from her all that she knew.

And so on, through each grim, sordid, consequent detail, with speed and with scientific precision, until the case of the State, complete and invulnerable, clicked shut.

That case, of course, was challenged in the Court. The strange woman sold her home and all that she had, to hire lawyers for her son's defence. And these brought every sort of wild, useless counter-accusation against the State Police. With the sole result that they, the lawyers themselves, having gone beyond bounds, were disciplined by the Court, while their client paid for his crime the extreme penalty.

Now the thing to observe is this: Joe Lasalle, from the moment in which he fired his shot, was a doomed man. He had not the shadow of a chance to make a get-away.

Brennan and Gingrich, it happened, nipped him at Shaverton on the Dallas-Luzerne road. But if he had chosen any other road or bypath, or if he had cut across to any trolley or train, or if he had hidden, biding his time, nevertheless and with exactly the same certainty would he have fallen into the grip of the officers of the State Police. Within one hour from the moment when he fired his shot, the iron ring encompassed him without one break.

Had the crime been reported less promptly, the arrest might have been proportionately delayed. But the web of The Force covers every inch of the State, and its arm reaches over the Nation.

Again, brought to trial, he had not the shadow of a chance. For Price and his men, trained in every turn

and trick of the laws of evidence, had missed not one nicety in foreseeing and preparing the case for the Commonwealth. No choice of verdict was possible.

To-day, in the lonely farmhouse in the hills, the only home she has known since she came to it a bride, a wonderful woman faces the future alone. She is seventy-five years old. Grief and horror have used her hard. Her strength of body ebbs daily, and as it slips and slips fast and faster through her desperate clutch, grows an icy fear of that nearing dawn when she can work no more, when by no human effort can she force herself up, drag herself from her bed. *Then* who will mother June's babies?

To be sure, they do wonders themselves — those bonny little creatures. Eleven-year old George, the only possible wage-earner, works in a road-making gang. June and Jenny wash the clothes and sweep and scrub, or, perched on kitchen chairs with their chubby legs dangling, pare potatoes and mend socks, while Baby Edith toddles from one to the other bestowing wet kisses wherever she can reach. And they are pretty, sweet-minded children, so filled with the spirit of love and gentleness and mutual devotion . . . Ah! there it is — the stab — the horror!

When the day comes — the sure, the terrible day when those old limbs can no more obey that iron will — when that tired old heart runs slow — stops — *what then will become of June's babies?* Will they be given to the State? Will they — oh! little clinging hands — oh, sweet, wet lips — oh, baby hearts of love — will they be — *separated?*

Then a strange, white light steals over the tragic face. The head lifts. The eyes show blue and stern. Words come like knives twisted in a wound . . .

"They would not listen when I told them. If they had listened — if they had called the State Police, *my June would have been alive to-night* — alive and *here* — with her babies."

IV

THE PATENT-LEATHER SHOES

An enormous blue-black sky, full of sharp, shimmering stars, contained the ethereal earth. The cloud-like banks of the Alleghenies, faint with new-fallen snow, rolled on and away forever in pearly heights and shadows. Their very forest tracts, overlaid with a fleecy mantle, merged into the even pallor of their waves. Silence and peace transfused an immaculate world. And cold — clear, bitter cold.

Up in the western centre of Pennsylvania, where hills rise high and snow falls heaviest, the tiny farming village of Herman lay like a fairy-land town, each roof and fence and rosebush crowned with its mound of white. And because it was almost midnight and quiet beyond all telling, the place was sound asleep.

One man there was, however, who had been on a journey, and who now, at this untimely hour, was breaking toward the end of his homeward path. Till his coming, not a creature had set foot abroad since the snow had ceased. Hill, plain, and highway, the place lay trackless as the flowing air. With joy he discerned his first familiar landmark, and as he reached that last rise that lifts the road into the village, he stopped to draw breath and to look about him, glad.

How still — how white — how still! Slowly he made out the roof-trees scattered hither and yon below, among the ghost-pale fields, and was half-

aware of a sort of awe, a sudden loneliness. As though all his friends were dead — long dead — as though even their day and time had passed away, and left no mark.

No sign of life, no spark of light. The pall of snow, smooth, faintly glittering under the stars, held the world to itself. How still! How pale!

And then, as he looked, his hushed heart gave a sudden leap and all his man's wits sprang alert within him. For there, around the side of one half-buried cottage, came licking a tongue of orange flame. He could not be mistaken!

No! See it there, flaring again — one sinister flash of color, sole in all this spectral world. That must be Ellen Bower's little home. Poor lone woman, with her young daughter and the six little children, all sound asleep, of course, in the rooms above! They would be burned in their beds!

The traveller flung himself forward, plunging heavily across the drifted fields.

"Fire! Fire!" he shouted, making a trumpet of his two hands. "Fire!" — and his voice tore through the night like the slash of a sword through flesh.

Windows flew up, then down with a bang, as neighbors, wakened by horror echoing through their dreams, saw the danger and sped to help. One lone woman, a girl, six little children, perhaps asleep in their beds, and their cottage in flames! The thought drove the men on. Each snatching a pail or a blanket, they rushed the ditches and fences, ploughed through the drifts, and jumped into work as they found it, with all the speed and strength in their power.

Valiantly toiling, by rapid play together they prevailed at last to control the blaze. To their heartfelt relief it was over before any great harm had been done.

Then, having quenched the last ember, they returned to their several homes in well-earned peace of mind to finish their broken night's sleep.

But Ellen Bower could not finish her sleep — did not want to finish it, for the reason that she and hers had been close to death, that her mind was full of chilling fear, and her head of common sense.

"So it's come at last!" she muttered, as she turned from watching the last good, charcoal-smudged neighbor go his way. "So it's really come at last! Well — now's the time, then! This very instant! Now! Thank God, there'll be nobody stirring yet for hours!"

She was a big woman, Ellen Bower — tall, and heavily built. But her hands shook as she pulled on her rubber boots and snatched her shawl from its peg, and her heart was hammering with more than physical exertion as she hurried out and away to the nearest trusty telephone.

"State Police!" she responded, to Central's sleepy "What number?"

"State Police," clear and alert, a man's voice rang back over the wire.

"I am Mrs. Bower," she panted. "I live in Herman. My house has just been a-fire. It's out now. But the house all but burned up. I think it was set on purpose. And I think I know who did it. I wish a trooper could come straight over to see me *now*."

"All right, Mrs. Bower. You're about seven miles away from us. We'll get there just as soon as we can make it."

"You'll know my place without asking, because it's on the skirts of the town as you come — and because it's nigh sure to be the only one with a light. Oh, hurry all you can!"

Then she ran home to wait — till two soldierly young figures in the uniform of the State rode up to the gate — Corporal Richard Fairservice and Private Beltz. And Corporal Fairservice, late Sergeant of the Fifteenth United States Cavalry, honorably discharged, "character excellent," is the sort of a man that most people trust on sight. Ellen Bower, guided by a pertinent question or two, without hesitation laid all before him.

Her young daughter, she said, had been annoyed by the attentions of a worthless fellow whose people lived in the immediate vicinity. The man was a bar-room porter in a neighboring town, vicious, ignorant, and with far too much money to spend for any proper explaining. The girl disliked him, and she, the mother, resented his intrusion.

"I am a poor woman," she broke out, in the midst of her tale, "but we are decent, honest people, and my girl is an honest girl, and I won't have her name besmirched with such company. So I ordered him to stay away and to leave my daughter alone. And she herself refused to speak to him.

"Then he was mad. And many's the time we've had notes from him, stuck under the door, or tied to a stone and thrown over the fence, saying he'd make

us regret it. And several times he's met one or another of my little children outside, and sent the child home crying, with the message that he'd 'fix' us all, some day.

"So now, when this thing happened, when we were snatched out of our beds to-night with smoke and flames around us, I said to myself:

"'It's come at last. This is McDonald's work. Now I'll go to the State Police.'

"But I did n't say one word to the neighbors, for fear he should get wind and run. I had sense enough for that. And because, too, I wanted 'em all to clear out quick, just as soon as ever the fire was killed, so they should n't muss up the trail for you Troopers.

"There! I've done all I can. I believe McDonald set the fire, out of his grudge against me. This time he failed. But how can I live with fear hanging over my head? I can't look to my neighbors for help. This is such a weak little place. And who wants the ill-will of a rogue? I don't mind work and common hardship. I can stand a heap of that, for the children's sake. But this fear for them, day and night, will be killing me. *Lads, I have no big boys of my own — will you boys help me?*"

Stalwart as she was, her lips twitched as she spoke, and the hard-wrung tears stood in her honest eyes.

"We'll do our very best," said Corporal Fairservice. "And thank you kindly for letting us get here before the trail was cold. That's worth everything — everything. Come on outside, Beltz, we'll set to work."

A rapid investigation made clear the incendiary nature of the fire. A part of the outer rear wall of the cottage, and the floor of the porch as well, had been soaked with coal oil. And this enclosed porch contained, as is common in the region, the only stairway leading to the sleeping-rooms above. Had the fire once gained access to the stairway, the widow and her children would have had no chance whatever to escape. None at all.

"Here's the can he brought the oil in!" exclaimed Private Beltz, holding aloft an object that he had just pulled out from under a snow-veiled bush.

"And here's his track, to the best of my present belief. Take the can and come along." Corporal Fairservice passed down the back of the garden as he spoke, his flashlight turned on the snow. "There's only this one trail from the rear, and it's not the natural road for any of the neighbors going home from the fire. Yes, here it runs, out through the back garden gate. But what little prints! Come along. We've got to see this through."

Walking on either side of the track — a single line of man's footsteps — clear in the virgin snow as ink on the printed page, and very small — the Troopers followed it away, over farming land and fences, through brush and brier and ditches, for three good miles and more. Then it led to heavy woods.

Into that faintly fragrant darkness, the two still traced their man, one on either hand. Here, also, bright crystal covered everything, making each withered fern-stalk, each laurel bush, each shrub and vine and creeper, a wand or tent or wreath of shining

fleece. The great boughs spreading overhead bore such wide canopies of snow that they shut away the stars, and the rays of the Troopers' searchlights seemed to reveal, in their little spheres, a frost king's ebony-pillared cave, vaulted with glittering white. Once and again a branch creaked or a bough came crashing down, with the weight of the snow upon it. But otherwise the place was as still as the ever-vocal woods can be.

It was evident, now, that the maker of the trail had deliberately tried to confuse it. Here he had jumped from tree to tree, and from tree to tree again, in the endeavor to break and multiply the track. In and out he had wound, and then run back again, describing a maze of loops and overlapping tangles. Patiently, rapidly, the searchers followed on, unwinding a mile of labyrinth, to find themselves in the end on the farther side of the woodland.

Here the trace shot straight ahead for a considerable distance, then sharply returned on itself partway, shot forward again, and again returned as before. Thrice was the manœuvre repeated. The third time, the line struck finally off in a new direction. One on either side of the footprints, always, the Troopers traced this fresh departure for a full mile, when it led to a farmhouse, completely around it, and so in a circle around the barn.

At that point the recent passage of a horse and sleigh had effaced the mark. Briefly the hunters scouted at loss. Then, farther down the road, they picked it up again, where it left the highway and broke across the fields — in a straightaway course to the McDonald house.

It was in the midst of the wee hours now. The house lay dark and still. Corporal Fairservice rapped on the door with the firm and measured rap of sure authority.

In a moment a window above stairs creaked.

"Who's there?" a gruff man's voice called down.

"Officers of the State Police. We want to come in. To see Mr. Ed McDonald."

"Well, Ed McDonald ain't here, and you ain't comin' in, either." The voice swelled with defiant bluster.

"If you don't let us in at once," Corporal Fairservice quietly replied, "I shall break this door."

Suddenly changing tone, the other began a protest. "Don't do it! Don't break it!" he cried. "I'll come right down. I'll open the door."

Which he forthwith did, candle in hand.

"Where is Ed McDonald?" the Corporal demanded of the dishevelled figure shivering in the entrance hall.

Now, every member of the McDonald family lived in the shadow of a dubious fame, and the attitude natural to all of them, before the law, was that of mingled hostility and fear.

"Ed ain't home," the barelegged one made answer, sullenly.

"That," said the Corporal, "is not true." And, regardless of the other's noisy disclaimers, ran up the stairs.

There in the first chamber, under the comforters of a broad, old-fashioned bed, some one lay huddled down, apparently deep in slumber. The Corporal, turning his flashlight full on the face, recognized his

man. But that sleep proved strangely persistent. The eyelids, quivering under the strong white ray, remained fast shut.

The Corporal swung his light around the room — the usual minor farmhouse chamber in all respects but one: it seemed to contain a quite unusual quantity of clothing.

And the garments, instead of reposing in closets and drawers, paraded about as if their owner kept a sort of shop there. Here hung a pair of purple trousers, capped by their waistcoat. Next, the purple coat, extended on a hanger, as though to make the most of it. After that, a gay plaid mackinaw jacket; a black suit; two gaudy waistcoats; a watch and some jewellery, ranged along the bureau-top; a string of brilliant neckties; and so on through a considerable wardrobe.

"What's the meaning of this?" thought the Corporal. He glanced at each several garment — each piece of jewellery — more particularly at the watch.

Then his eyes fell on a chair near the bed. Over its back hung a lilac shirt, evidently taken off that night; and on the floor by its side stood a pair of small and brand-new patent leather shoes.

The Corporal, picking up the shoes, scrutinized them well.

"Incidentally," he thought, "this little chap's a dude." Then he laid his hand on the sleeper's shoulders and gave him a bit of a shake.

"Get up!" he said. "I want to talk to you."

The 'possum opened his eyes, slowly, vaguely, as if emerging from the deeps. He yawned, stretched,

then concentrated his cloudy gaze in a long, puzzled frown, as if to question the reality of the figure standing over him.

"Come," said the Corporal, "that will do. Dress yourself."

"Why the hell should I? Who are you?"

"You know this uniform, Ed McDonald. *Move!*"

Grumbling petulantly, the 'possum assumed raiment, and so shuffled before his visitor, even as that visitor suggested, down the stairs.

In the sitting-room, where the air-tight stove glowed red, some one had lighted the lamp. Before the stove stood the man who had disputed the Trooper's entrance, half-clothed, unbrushed, and glumly bristling. By the stove, on haircloth rocking-chairs, huddled two sour-visaged women, yellow-skinned and shrew-marked, their heads spurred with curl-papers unashamed. By the door, aloof and entirely non-committal, correct as a regular on parade, stood Private Beltz.

To this group entered Corporal Fairservice, preceded by his reluctant friend.

"Sit down," said the Corporal.

The 'possum sat down.

Said the Corporal, after a swift, appraising survey of the audience:

"To-night an attempt has been made to burn the Bower house, over in Herman Village. Ed McDonald, I think you set that fire."

"I did not! It's a lie!" affronted Innocence declaimed, while all the household joined, indignant, virtuous.

"How did you spend this last afternoon and evening?"

Minutely, volubly, McDonald detailed his afternoon. "And then," he finished, "right after supper — it was snowin' hard still but I put on my big boots, and I did n't care, I wanted company — I went over to the neighbors, over yonder, and passed the evening visiting, and then I turned around and came straight home to bed."

"So there!" — a triumphant feminine chorus.

Corporal Fairservice, during the recital, had been standing in the doorway with his hands behind his back. Now he brought his right hand forward, dangling the patent-leather shoes.

"Whose are these?" he asked.

"Don't know. Never saw 'em before," McDonald affirmed.

"I got them in your bedroom. *Whose are they?*"

"Oh — I remember now. They belong to some one who was staying here and who went away quite a while ago."

"These shoes," said the Corporal, "have been worn to-night. Inside and out they are wet with snow-water."

"Can't help it," the 'possum nonchalantly tossed back. "They ain't none o' mine. And I had my rubber boots on when I went out to-night."

"Sh'd think *any* fool 'd know no *man* 'd ever wear things like that — let alone in winter weather!" snapped one of the ladies by the stove. "Them's *my* boots. Our visitor give 'em to me. I wore 'em out when I went to feed the hens to-night."

The Corporal was looking at her curiously as she spoke. "Madam," said he, as she finished, "will you do me the favor just to slip this shoe on?"

His manner was faultless, and no one could say that he smiled.

The woman glowered. But this was no time to refuse. Trooper Beltz stood over her with the shoe. She snatched it out of his hand. She kicked off her heavy slipper. With a do-or-die expression on her face, she thrust her toes into the thing and began to tug. Short of the sacrifice of Cinderella's step-sister, nothing could persuade that shoe to admit that foot.

The Corporal turned with urbane seriousness to the other curl-papers. "Madam, *your* foot, I see, is small. I am sure *you* can put it on."

Half-mollified, half-afraid, the woman made the attempt. But the shoe, size five-and-a-half, stuck promptly. Obviously enough, no condition of wetness or dryness could have changed the result in either case. The shoe was numbers too small.

"Now, Mr. McDonald, will you try this?"

"What do you take me for? A girl? *I* can't get those things on!"

"Why, then just let me see if I can do it for you. I never was a shoe clerk, but sooner or later we Troopers have to turn our hand to lots of things." The Corporal, most affable, knelt before the seated man.

As he did so, Private Beltz moved quietly over and stood behind him. In The Force they do not offer unnecessary advantage.

The little patent-leather shoes slid over McDonald's feet with only such slight sticking as their

soaked condition and the man's original vanity explained. The Trooper laid the buttonhole flaps in place. They met the buttons easily.

"McDonald," he said, rising, "you are under arrest. Mr. Beltz, you will hold this man here while I look about outside."

Five minutes later, Fairservice reappeared in the sitting-room door. "Come!" he summoned the prisoner. "And, Beltz, *bring that oil-can, too.*"

In the fresh snow on the porch, and again along the walk between the steps and the road, the line of footprints stood out clearly. And the little patent-leather shoes fitted them to a hair's breadth. But all led into the house.

"These," said the Corporal, "are the tracks that brought us here."

"Yes," agreed Beltz, "and from here *to* the neighbor's there should be no tracks. According to the story we've just heard, the snow would have covered 'em."

Nor were any outgoing footprints visible.

Escorting their prisoner between them, the two Troopers tramped off toward the house of that neighbor with whom, as McDonald asserted, he had passed the evening before. More and more sulkily the little man waded the starlit, untrodden fields until, as they reached the neighbor's door, he achieved an obstinate speechlessness.

At the first announcement of the identity of the callers, the neighbor came hastening down to give admittance.

"Come right in, gentlemen! What's the news? What, you, too, McDonald? Why, what brings you

out this time o' night? Come right into the kitchen where it's warm."

And then, raising his voice, to reach upstairs — "Hurry, wife, hurry down! Let's get the news. Here's State Troopers come to see us."

The good woman descended promptly, hastily clad in a wrapper, huddled in a shawl, bringing her little girl with her. Visibly this extraordinary event touched the whole family with a lively and cheerful interest. Far be it from them to wish ill to any one; but when adventure came of its own accord, why, then, praise be to the chance that granted first view of it!

"I want to ask you, sir, whether Mr. Ed McDonald was here in your house last evening," the Corporal asked, his inflection bare of leading.

"Why, yes," said the householder. "He was here. He came and set awhile and then he left, about bedtime — just after it stopped snowing."

"That would be about what hour?"

"Oh, 'long about eight or quarter after."

"Can you recall how he was dressed?"

"Why — let's see." The farmer pondered a moment, then gave an account of his late visitor's costume that corresponded essentially with McDonald's own statement.

"Do you remember what he wore on his feet?"

The farmer hesitated, but his wife helped him out with quick decision:

"He had on a pair of black, shiny shoes."

"Yes, yes! That's right. I reck'lect now," the husband agreed.

"No!" exclaimed McDonald, jarred out of his silence by sudden alarm. "No! You've forgot. I had my rubber boots on, did n't I?"

"You did *not*, Ed!" affirmed the wife, unshaken. "You had on a pair of patent-leather shoes, and they were new."

Then up spoke the little girl, big-eyed and breathless with the whole strange event, and with the excitement of bearing testimony. "Yes," she piped, "awful new they were. Awful new and bright and shiny. I was lookin' at 'em all the time. And they squeaked so funny whenever you walked across the floor!"

"Like these?" the Corporal asked, producing his treasures.

"Just like them, *exactly*," cried the family in chorus.

The Corporal looked at McDonald critically. McDonald, speechless again, stared at his rubber toes. But unyielding defiance stood out all over him.

"We thank you very much for your courtesy, and we're sorry we had to disturb you. Good-night!" said the Corporal.

Once again in the arctic open, and with the friendly night, their ally, still keeping folk abed, it was only a matter of steady persistence to do the rest.

"Here, dear one," observed Private Beltz to the 'possum, "is where we first strike your outward-bound course. Have n't you the cutest little paddy-paws, though!"

Clear still and unconfused, the trail of the patent-

leather shoes led away from this house across the fair snow till it reached the intersection of two roads, one of which made toward the village of Herman. This road it followed — followed for some five hundred yards. Then, switching off to the left, it jumped the ditch, wallowed up the bank, and stopped flush against the hither side of a fence.

"See where he stepped up on the rail? See where he leaned across and knocked the snow off the tops of these bushes? Just let me have a look!" cried the Corporal.

He himself was hanging over the fence, now, searching the ground with his pocket light.

"Here it is!" he proclaimed triumphantly. "Take a look, Beltz," and he straightened up to turn an eye on the prisoner.

Close under the lee of the fence, sharp-edged in the lesser snow, a round firm hole appeared.

"Ah-ha!" exclaimed Beltz. Then over he swung and carefully lowered into that hole his precious oil-can. It fitted precisely.

"So *that* is what I've been toting you for all night, you dirty little beast!" he mused, regarding the can with unfeigned affection. "You remember, Corporal, there's an oil-well just in there, behind those trees? I reckon our friend filled little Maudie right at that very well, and left her here convenient, some days ago. Did n't you, darling?"

But the 'possum held his peace.

Once more the Troopers resumed the trail, which still persisted toward the town. Occasionally it showed that the traveller had stopped; and then,

always beside the prints of stamping feet, stood the clear impression of the can.

McDonald had worn no gloves that frigid night. The tin bail must almost have frozen his hands. His stops would have been to set the can down and beat life into his stiffened fingers.

And each time that the circle appeared, Trooper Beltz conscientiously placed his can within it. "Just to be able to say we bore you out," he explained to his friend the prisoner.

"This, too," the Corporal would add, as, producing a shoe, he dropped it into a companion footprint.

Presently, now, the track struck off to the railroad bed, thenceforward pursuing the steel to the very skirt of the village. But there, where the rails run under a viaduct, the footsteps veered again, to mount the bridge. On the summit their maker had stopped once more, setting his burden down beside him.

"What a complete little beau you are, McDonald! When you go out to call on the ladies you simply *have* to dress up in your best, don't you! Purple boiled shirt and shiny shoes and all — even when the weather's at zero and the snow three feet deep — even when your mission to the ladies is to burn them alive in their beds. — *What* a little beau you are!"

"See!" said the Corporal. "There is the Bower cottage, right down there below. You could throw a stone from this very spot and hit it. And you climbed up here — did n't you, McDonald — just to get a good look around — to see if every one had gone to bed — to see if any one was on the road at

that hour. And there was n't. So, after you'd warmed your hands and feet again, you picked up your can — this very can — and you came along, just as we'll go now — always following your footprints."

Those footprints led to a point some hundred yards above the widow's cottage. Then they turned, entered the little garden and were lost among the tramplings of the fire fighters.

The case came up for trial in the December term of Court. In the interval Corporal Fairservice, having duly completed its preparation, did a little quiet investigating of the career of Edward McDonald during the previous year. This investigation proved the man's guilt in a wide range of petty offences, including the theft of the very watch that the Corporal had noticed displayed on his bureau at home.

At his trial for felonious arson, however, McDonald continued to assert innocence, and from some obscure source was supplied with ample means to prolong the fight. It was toward the end of a four-day struggle that counsel for the defence saw fit to make use of the patent-leather shoes.

"My client," said he, "is threatened with conviction by a pair of shoes — those very shoes on the table before you, gentlemen of the jury — shoes of a type made by the hundreds of thousands and distributed around the globe! It has been assumed that the man who wore those shoes set the house afire. Very well, let it be so. *I affirm that those shoes fit the foot of Corporal Fairservice of the State Police.*"

The court-room caught its breath, sat up suddenly and stared. What could this mean?

The counsel for the defence surveyed his effect. Now he concluded, with smooth insinuation in his smile:

"I suppose that the officer of the State Police can have no objection to trying on the shoes?"

"Certainly I will try them," replied the officer questioned.

Corporal Fairservice is six feet tall, broad and well-proportioned. In the sight of Court and jury, he unstrapped his high uniform puttee, pulled off his heavy boot, and thrust his foot into the little patent-leather gimcrack. It slid on easily.

Counsel for the defence looked about in triumph. This was magnificent. He braced himself for a flight.

But the Corporal was whispering to the District Attorney. Now he put his foot on a chair.

"May I ask," said the District Attorney, aloud, "if the counsel for the defence will kindly do us the favor to step over and fasten this shoe?"

A little warily, his opponent drew near — looked at the raised foot and the boot upon it — ventured to touch it, to draw buttonholes and buttons together. The lap refused to cover the Corporal's instep by a good bit more than an inch.

"No flat-feet on our State Force, sir," observed the District Attorney, cheerfully.

The Court sentenced Edward McDonald, found guilty in manner and form as indicted, to a term of

not less than three, and not more than seven years in the Western Penitentiary. While he stays there, Ellen Bower and her little family will sleep of nights in peace.

Recorder's Note: The only departures from fact in this narrative are in the names "Bower" and "McDonald," which are substitutes.

V

THE HAND-PICKED JOB

Nobody ever dies in Freeland, so they say. The hills are too high, the air too good, the sky too broad, the spring water too lively. So, if you go there ever so long from now, you still should find Frank Malloy and Squire Malloy — no kin to each other, those two, though their fathers did come from the same glen in Donegal — and Mr. McGee and Mike Lupotka and Daniel Breslin and the rest. And they will all tell you the very same tale, if you ask them.

But Daniel Breslin's brother-in-law might not be there — who knows? — for he went off to France with a rifle on his shoulder. And as for little Annie Voichek, her sweet face is no more for the gaze of men, anywhere.

Freeland perches above the rhododendron thickets and the trout-stream woods, some seventeen miles south of Wilkes-Barre. It is the highest inhabited spot in Pennsylvania, they like to tell you. But, however that may be, it is certainly high of spirit. The landlady of the Central Hotel leads you into her parlor with the air of making you welcome to a Christmas surprise. The red-cheeked girl in the dining-room as smilingly as truthfully assures you "It's *all* good!" when you hesitate over the bill of fare. And the Town Council, reposing on the middle of its spines in the front windows of the lobby, looks too gaily content to move ever.

Frank Malloy's tailor shop flourishes in the hotel basement. Daniel Breslin's undertaking establishment (how in the world does this man live!) dominates the lower street, and all the remaining conveniences desired by a comfortable population of six thousand men and women, alive or dead, string cheerfully along between.

Then, on the outskirts, come a few factories and machine shops. And beyond, and all around, mines, mines, mines, with still more mines, or "mine patches." And of course, where those things are, things do occasionally happen.

When Captain Pitcher, commanding "B" Troop of the Pennsylvania State Police, sent Corporal Freeman and two privates of The Force over to mother the place, nothing in particular was going on, however, beyond the usual little trickle of human incident.

Nevertheless, "Was I glad to see 'em?" Mike Lupotka exclaimed. "Why, Lord love you, I *got* to see 'em! I'm Constable, ain't I? And charged to keep the peace? Well, what if I *am* as big as a house, and afraid of nobody, ain't I an elective officer? These Freeland people are my friends and kin. Always was and will be. But the Troopers ain't nobody's friends — nor enemies neither, for the matter o' that — only accordin' to how folks behave.

"Now, if *I* did what *they* do, I'd never get re-elected. But if *they* did n't do what they *do* do, I would n't get reëlected neither, see? Sure.

"Look here once: I'm Constable, ain't I? And supposed to keep the peace? Well: And our people

want peace, right enough and are goin' to get it. *But do you think they'd stand for one o' their own folks, like me, really botherin' in too much when some o' themselves gets lively?* Not on your life! 'T ain't in reason. I'd lose my job. So, State Police? Why, we got to have 'em! Gosh!"

Meantime, Corporal Freeman, his two men and their three horses, settling into Freeland, began to take stock of the territory for thirty miles around.

Physically, it is a beautiful territory, though cruelly gashed and scarred by the hand of man tearing at the riches beneath the soil. Humanly, it is a human territory, full of people doing what people have always done when not much hampered by antecedents or by conventions.

Corporal Freeman and his men took stock of the region both as to geography and as to personnel. And now and again, when something uncomfortable seemed likely to happen, Corporal Freeman and his men stretched out a calm, sure hand and broke that bud short off.

So came one fine Sunday, the 30th of September, 1917. All Freeland had been to church, or had played ball or pool or pinochle, or had sat on its front steps with the children and the dogs, the bright morning long. Now it had just finished its dinner, pushed back its chair and begun to feel dull.

For example, Daniel Breslin, his wife and his wife's brother, still lingering at their table, desultorily cracking nuts — comfortable, satiated, and

about talked out. Yet a few moments and one of them would surely get up with a yawn and, "Well, folks, guess I'll take a little nap."

Suddenly, like a stab in the back, a terrible scream split the sleepy air — from close by — from just across the street — the voice of a woman in desperate fear and pain.

"Good gracious!" cried Mrs. Breslin. "It's that poor creature again!"

"Again? Where? What do you mean?" Her brother was already up.

"Why, it's over in that little yellow house, in the alley across the way. Oh, poor thing, poor thing! Last night we heard just the same, and Dan telephoned Constable. Constable came and found an Italian beating his wife. He arrested the man. Locked him up. And this morning the woman ran over and told me she had no money, nor anything at all in the house for herself and her children to eat. So I gave her some food and she took it home. — O God have mercy on us! Ah-h!"

Another blood-curdling shriek. Mrs. Breslin crouched in her chair, covering her ears.

"I'm going across!" cried her brother.

"Don't, don't!" she implored. "You'll only get into some horrible mess and do no good at all."

But the front door slammed.

Five minutes later Shovlin stood again on the threshold, pushing before him a piteous thing.

"Here!" — he spoke through tightened lips — "do what you can for her, sis, I could n't leave her there!"

As Mrs. Breslin worked, stanching blood, the woman talked. "I want to tell everything," she began.

Daniel Breslin listened awhile. Then he started for the street. "You stay here with them, Shovlin," he tossed back. "I'm going to put this up to the State Police themselves. It's full time it quit."

But Corporal Freeman, in the substation quarters, shook his head.

"If she wants her husband arrested, let her swear out a warrant before a Justice of the Peace. Otherwise these are fool's errands," said he.

"Just wait, though, till I tell you: this is more than the common family row," Breslin went on. "When Constable arrested this fellow last night he locked him up. To-day Squire Malloy fines him ten dollars, warns him, and turns him loose. So to-night, of course, he simply hammers the woman again. And so far it's only the same old hopeless story. But this time there's more beyond: *The woman says he's a robber.*"

"That," said the Corporal, reaching for his helmet, "is a horse of another breed."

On the way down the street, stopping at the Central Hotel, he ran into the lobby and pulled forth Frank Malloy. For Frank Malloy is not tailor alone, you see, but County Detective as well, with a duty to handle this kind of thing, and to serve thereto as witness. Together the three entered Breslin's door.

But the woman was gone.

"She would n't wait," explained Mrs. Breslin. "She was too afraid of what might come to the children. So after you left, Dan, weak as she was, she ran back home to them. And now Brother 's hanging around outside lest he kills her entirely before the Trooper arrives. Oh, make haste! For the love of God, make haste, do!"

Another moment, and the Corporal, followed by Frank Malloy, entered the little shack in the alley across the way.

The room itself told at a glance its tale of utter shiftlessness and want. A stove, a bench, a chair or two, a dirty lamp, a pan or so, no more. And on the bench, the woman, cowering, her eyes on the door to the room beyond.

Her thick black hair, lank with blood and water, hung heavy on her neck. Her white bodice, split and tattered, showed great splashes of fresh red. Her two hands, clamps of nervous terror, clutched her skirts on either side. Her face, ghastly in its lean and livid fever, never turned from that inner door.

"Good-evening," said the Corporal.

No sign.

"She's deaf, maybe," Malloy suggested.

The Corporal walked over and laid a hand on her arm. With a gasp she sprang up, shrinking back. As she moved they saw the thing that her wide-spread skirt had sheltered — three little children, huddled on the floor.

"It's all right," said Freeman.

Then, recognizing the uniform, she fell to kissing his hand.

"He's in there!" she cried tumultuously, indicating the door. "And I can't stand any more — not *any* more. I want to tell all about him this very night, even if he kills me. Killing is better than this. I'm deaf. See? Well, he kicked me deaf. We are starving — the children and me. He drinks half the time and we get no food. Only this. Look here!"

She pulled aside her blouse to show a hideous raw mark across her breast.

"He gave me that last night. To-night it was this," and she pushed apart the masses of her hair, revealing a long fresh cut laying open the scalp.

"Now, he'll do these things to me, I guess, as long as I live. Yes. Because I belong to him. I'm his wife. But must he kill the children, too? The little, little children that do no hurt at all? — Then listen: I *will* tell. He's done more. He's a robber. *A robber*, I tell you! Sure you can get him for that?"

The appeal in her face was terrible to see.

"It was just after we were married. He came home one night and he showed me — "

But the Trooper stopped her short. "You can tell us anything you like," he quietly assured her, "but I'll bring your husband in here first to hear what you have to say."

A moment later the Corporal emerged from that inner room, shoving before him a man — a man of medium height, slight, with a mop of curly black hair, a long, flowing black moustache, and a chin blue and rough with stubble beard. His glittering eyes travelled sidewise, from the woman to his

captor, then back, and back again, and his fingers opened and clenched.

"Is this your husband?" asked the Corporal.

"Yes."

"What is your name?" The grip on the man's shoulder took a visible touch of emphasis.

"Alfonso Passo."

"Yes. And I am Jennie Passo, his wife. And tonight *I* speak!"

The children had stolen forward to her knees. Their big black eyes stared out of colorless, skeleton faces. The eldest, a girl perhaps five years old, showed utter terror in every line. The second was just too little to understand.

Now the mother spread her arms before them, pressing them back against her own poor body, as she launched into speech. It was like some small weak, terrified, outraged animal — like a beaten, bleeding, starveling bitch, briefly exalted into valor by pain and fear.

So, in a high-pitched monotone, she poured out her tale — fast, faster, as if she feared lest her courage wane or means be found to stop her breath before the last word was done.

When she married this man — and that was October 21st, eight years ago, perish the day — he had scarcely a penny to his name, she affirmed. He worked a little, about the mines, but only a little. They lived on credit and at once were worse than poor. Then came a night, five weeks, maybe, from the wedding, when Passo, who had left her that morning with a curse to fill the empty cupboard, returned in haste.

"Clean up to leave right away. We've got to get out of here." And he showed her a fat purse.

"Where did you get it?" she asked.

"Took it off a girl," he leered; "a very nice little girl."

Even as she tied the knot of their bundle, he flung her out of the house. By the shortest cut he made for the outskirts of the village, thence, avoiding both highways and byways, across country and away. Until three o'clock in the morning they tramped through the brush, she spent with fatigue, he pushing and pulling her with blows and oaths, till they reached the town of Hazelton, and an obscure Italian inn.

There they spent the remnant of the night.

But before they slept he rewarded her with a glimpse of the contents of the purse. One hundred and fifty-nine dollars, it contained — a fortune.

"Where did you get it?" again she asked.

"Off a girl — a very nice little girl," once more he replied — "and I bet she'll suffer for it, too."

"And that morning we took a train to New York, and we stayed in New York a week," the woman gasped on; "then we came back here to Freeland and stayed just one single day. That very night we crept out like before, and back to New York again. For he"—she half-rose from her seat in her desperate eagerness, pointing with outstretched arm at the man before her — "*he* said the police were hunting him *because he had robbed the girl!* Yes, you did, you did, no matter if you kill me for it! Can you deny it? Will you deny it? What?"

Slowly the man's eyes fell before her frenzied challenge.

"Mr. Passo" — now it was the officer of State Police who spoke — "Mr. Passo, you have listened to what your wife has been telling me. What have you to say? Is it the truth?"

Silent, the Italian bowed his head.

So Corporal Freeman and Frank Malloy, one on either side, led him away to the familiar jail, and, on charge of assault and battery, locked him up to await the morrow's hearing by the Justice of the Peace.

Then the Corporal struck into his job.

Eight years ago, if the story was true, a girl, age, name, and character unknown, had been robbed of a sum not smaller than one hundred and fifty-nine dollars, at an unknown place within such distance of Freeland as a man might reach and return from in a day's time. Who was the girl, what the place?

In its actual setting, among surroundings so heterogeneous, the question was vague. Eight years ago anything might have happened here — and, happening, might have been deeply overlaid with the dust of later events. Besides, since no arrest had been made, who would remember so little a thing — who but the criminal and the victim of his crime?

"No, *I* never heard tell of it." — "No, *I* don't reck'lect," answered one after another of the neighbors roundabout.

"Just think again," the Corporal urged, where the will seemed good. "Think way back."

But nobody knew.

Corporal Freeman, late 12th United States Infantry, with an A 1 Philippine record, now of the Pennsylvania State Police — this Corporal Freeman took a fresh grip. "If Passo is a robber," he said to himself, "I can't let him loose on the community without a better fight than this."

For he saw on the cards a second release of the wife-beater, whose next move, in view of the wife's rebellion, would logically be to kill her first and then to disappear for good.

"If he's a robber," thought Freeman, "I must be able to prefer the charge immediately after the Justice's hearing to-morrow night."

So he struck out on a broader line.

But nobody seemed to know.

And then it was that a minor inspiration skipped into the Corporal's head.

"McGee," buzzed that little thin voice, "McGee would remember if any one does — McGee."

Now Mr. McGee, since many years, had been field reporter for the papers of Hazelton, biggest neighboring town. It was his business to know everything, and his gift to forget nothing entirely that once had lodged in his mind.

"Let me see," pondered Mr. McGee, white-haired and ruddy-faced, looking up from his copy and tilting back his chair — "Does that bring anything back? Eight years ago — 1909 — That was the year that "C" Troop moved up from Reading, and all Berks County put up such a howl about letting it go — the year Sergeant Beck cleaned out the Black Hand at Hazelton, and Oftedahl, of yours,

saved half a township from burning off the map — Yes — I know — Little girl robbed? — Let's see: Why, sure!

"There was a Polish family, living over Highlands way. I don't recall their name just now. But they sent this girl over to the office of the mine where the man worked, one pay-day, with a handful of checks to cash. Later they said that on her way home the girl was robbed. No arrest was made, and considerable doubt was felt whether any such robbery had really taken place. There wasn't any sequel. It just died out. Here, I've got the name for you now. It's Voichek. Over in Highlands they lived."

So, by short-cuts and corner clippings, Corporal Freeman reached Highlands and its main street.

As a matter of fact, though, Highlands has but one street, and only a score, more or less, of dwellings. Highlands is just a "mining patch." All its houses are exactly alike and all painted red. Each has before it a sizeable yard, of exactly the same dimensions as its neighbor's, fenced in with miscellaneous collections of rough slabs, derelict laths and slats, and such other longish wooden things as come handy. Each toes the common line, to an inch, and all together wear, somehow, the air of a comfortable if very informal front-row orchestra audience at a Saturday night mill-town movie.

It is their strict alignment, their many windows, and above all, the scene before them, that impart that auditory air. When you look for the first time

beyond the muddy road skirting their gates, with its amiable population of puppies, hens and ducks, and over the spine of the long, grey culm-bank couched on its farther side like a flotsamed whale on a beach, you fairly catch your breath.

For beyond that culm-bank the ground drops away with a sudden plunge — disappears — gives place to spacious void. And where you see solid earth again, it is far away, distance-hazed, of strange and grandiose outline.

There, on the high skyline, above the mountains' flowing shoulders, for mile on mile, the bold silhouettes of the breakers cut the sky. Peaks of coal-refuse, absolutely conical, black as night, enormous — like unspent volcanoes of a wizard's dream — rise, preposterous, against the clouds. "Strippings," sharp and raw as Culebra Cut, slash big scars of yellow across the plane. And everywhere between, like the remnants of an exquisite verdure tapestry rent by swords and blown to bits by guns, lie the tattered remnants of the beauty of the world.

But Corporal Freeman, for the moment, saw none of these things. Corporal Freeman's mind was fixed on the front-row orchestra chairs. In which of those twin red houses did the Voichek family live? He looked down the line. Some showed trig and tidy, some debatable, some frankly down-at-heel. Some had occupied that sizeable front yard with a vegetable garden that must have equalled a twenty per cent addition to the tenants' means. Some stopped at a bed of marigolds and a red geranium or two. Some ran entirely to beer bottles and empty cans.

"I hope I draw a good one," the Corporal thought. And he asked a towhead swinging on a gate: "Where does Mr. Voichek live?"

"Last house," said Towhead. "End of the row."

And in very fact, the last house, at the end of the row, was the neatest one of all.

Mrs. Voichek sat in the kitchen, with the new baby in her arms. The stove beside her bloomed as smoothly black as care and polish could make it. The bare floor had earned that good soft grey that is the fruit of soap and water. The window-panes shone spotless. The scanty furniture stood orderly aligned. On the walls hung a crucifix, and certain bright-toned religious prints.

Mrs. Voichek, herself of an austere neatness, sat with Michael, the new baby, nursing in her arms. And her face, modest, open, seemed full of gentle calm. As the Corporal entered, two other children, girl and boy, appearing from somewhere, came and stood behind her chair. They, too, were sweet-faced, gentle-mannered, still.

The woman rose to meet her guest.

"Will you please take place, sir?" she asked. And she motioned to a child to bring forward a chair.

The Corporal launched at once into his errand. The whole atmosphere denied reason for calculated approach.

"I understand," said he, "that some eight years ago one of your family, a girl, was robbed. It is my business, as an officer of the State Police, to do my best to set such things right, no matter how long past they may be. So I come to you to ask for in-

formation as to when and where the thing occurred and all concerning it.

As he began to speak, the woman had bowed her head. Now she raised it again, but over her face of an ageing peasant Madonna had settled a cloud of distress.

"Must I speak of it, sir?" she asked.

"I want to help you."

"Ah! It is too late. Too late for that. But you are State Officer. I will tell you all I know."

As she talked on, haltingly, searching her way in a language hard and strange to her tongue, the picture grew before the Corporal's eyes. He saw this thing that had happened eight years, lacking a month, ago. He saw this same little red house, neat and clean and orderly, this same woman, happy then, and eight years nearer the comeliness of her youth. He saw the miner, her husband, sober, hard-working, decent, each night returning from his toil, soot-faced and weary, but happy, too. Happy because his home was happy, his wife kind, good and thrifty, his multiplying children obedient, strong and bright, his little account in the bank growing bit by bit, day by day. All then was well in Voichek's world. He asked no more of it than that it should continue as it went. And his eldest child, his twelve-year-old Annie, was the pride and joy of his life.

Like a flight of steps the children ran, from Annie to the year-old baby. And Voichek and his wife hugged an ambition, a will, that was almost an obsession, for them all. Their ambition was that each and every chick should grow up in the fear of

God, in devotion to the Catholic Church, and in full enjoyment of the education so liberally offered by the public schools. Their will, to work early and late, to save cent by cent, and to lay up means that should safely establish the rising family.

So, among other economies, they filled all their spare rooms with boarders — other miners, like Voichek himself, that no way be neglected of adding to their store.

Community of occupation naturally united in many ways the household so composed. In many things the boarders and their host pooled interests, to save either effort or time. For example, it was needless that each several man, climbing out of his pit on pay-day afternoon, should walk all the way to the company office, at Jeddo, to draw his week's earnings. Rather let each, with his pay-cheek in his pocket, hasten home, wash off the coal-smudge, and plunge at once into good old Saturday night. Little Annie, with all the checks in her hand, could trudge through the woods to Jeddo, and bring back everybody's cash.

This, week after week, little Annie did.

So came the fifteenth day of November, 1909 — a day forever to be marked in bitter black. It was pay-day once again. Annie scrubbed her face till her cheeks and forehead glittered, braided her soft, brown hair so tight that only the smallest curls could escape, and pulled her short-sleeved jumper over her frock, because of the autumn pinch in the air.

Annie was little and round, brown-eyed and very gentle. Her mother kissed her, as she laid the

checks in her hand. Any woman must have kissed her, then — the child was so trusting-eyed, so innocent and sweet.

So, alone, she set out for Jeddo town, down the hill, across the valley, and up the hill again. So alone, she came to Jeddo office, gazed once more in awe at its four-square stone solidity, walked modestly up to the pay-window and offered her vouchers to the cashier. A kindly man, this cashier, and always good to the child. Now he even made some one wait — some stranger that Annie scarcely noticed and did not know — while he counted out the sum of the checks and passed it down within reach of her short arms. "Be careful, Annie," said he, "you've got a pretty big roll to-day."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir," fastening the envelope into her safest place — the bosom of her dress. Then she set out on her homeward way.

As she passed the company store, two other little girls, Anna Urish and Anna Bartosovech, Highlands neighbors of her own age, joined her, and the three together trudged ahead.

For a time — till beyond Drifton — they followed the railway track. It was safest there, their parents said — more travelled — more in common view. Then, when they must, they struck out on the short-cut footpath up the hill toward Highlands — a narrow path, so that they walked in single file, Annie between the two.

To little children it seemed a sort of magic way, this narrow path, with its shouldering rocks, its miniature forests of scrub-pine, its seas of leafless

huckleberry brush, its great round cushions of moss. And there, too, like a hungry dragon, lay always crouching, waiting, biding its hour, the Big Mine Cave — that yawning, black-jawed abyss, where the surface of the earth had fallen away revealing the jagged throat of galleries that, so the grown-ups said, led for tens of miles, hither and yon, no one knew where, under ground.

To-day, as ever, they neared the cavern with tense nerves. Kobolds, maybe — ghosts — demons from below. It was so deep, so wide, so dark — maybe the mouth of Hell. And no human soul in sight but only they themselves. Such little children! And how fast came the dusk!

Anna Urish, file-closer, looking ahead, felt her heart turn to ice. There trudged the others, steadily on. But — but — they looked so very small — and the mouth of the cave so deep, so dark! Surely it only bided its hour!

Down in the moss at her feet the four green, shining leaves of a winter-green plant caught her eye. Maybe its pungent tang would give her heart. She knelt to pick it up, as for an instant it evaded her chilled fingers among a mass of twigs.

In that instant, a shriek — a quivering cry of terror — almost stopped her breath.

She sprang up. There, just ahead, little Annie Voichek struggled with something in the form of a man.

Again the scream — cruel — unbearable.

Anna Urish, with no thought in her mind but utter panic, turned her back and ran. Anna Bartosovech,

giving just one rearward glance, fled in the opposite way. Little Annie Voichek, alone, struggled for her life — for she knew not what dearer than life — alone in that lonely path.

The grip had first clutched at her neck, from behind, snapping her head back so that spots of color dazzled her eyes. Yet somehow she broke loose from it, darting blindly ahead with outstretched arms. Again it seized her, and once again she escaped. Then a third time it struck, this unknown, unseen thing, catching her by the skirts, so that she fell on her back, while something closed about her throat, pinning her to the ground.

"If this is a devil from out of Hell," thought little Annie Voichek, heroine, "I must look him straight in the face and say my prayer."

So she opened her brown eyes wide.

Grinning down at her — so close that she felt its breath in her mouth — was a thing with the face of a man. He knelt above her. And while with one hand he pinioned her throat, with the other he fumbled at her breast. Little Annie Voichek looked him square between the eyes, and began her prayer.

He fumbled at her breast, and at last, with a jerk and a rending of cloth, tore free the precious envelope that she had so carefully pinned within. Half-rising he thrust it somewhere away, then, grinning still more evilly, bent over her once again. But little Annie Voichek never took her eyes from his face. If she should live a hundred years, she would always be able to see that face. And all the while her lips moved softly, slowly.

For it always helps if you remember Whose little girl you are, you know, and Who is taking care of you all the while, — if you just keep calm, quite calm, and say your prayer very slow.

And with that, praise be to our Blessed Lady forever and ever, the creature suddenly threw back his head as though he had heard an alarm, stared away far down the path, and, with a terrible oath on his lips, leaped aside and disappeared into the black mouth of the pit.

So little Annie Voichek, holding her tattered frock together, ran as fast as her feet would carry her, straight home and into her father's arms.

When Voichek had heard all the story she sobbed out, first he took his wife by the hand while they two, kneeling before the crucifix on the wall, gave thanks. Then, with a face white as death, he walked out of the house.

Two hours later, Voichek came back, moving slowly, with drooping shoulders, like a man weighted with grief. Entering the room, he sank down by the table and buried his head in his arms.

After a while the wife went over and touched him gently. "What is it, then?" she asked.

So he told her, in husky jerks.

He had been to the Constable, he said. The Constable would do what he could — whatever that might be.

But his friends — the other men — the men whose checks little Annie had carried together with his own — *they did not believe the child had been robbed!*

"What — what *do* they believe?" gasped the mother, already in her stricken heart knowing the truth.

"*They believe that you and I have taken all that money for ourselves, and that we have taught our Annie to lie!*"

And so those two that day passed into a torment whose fire had never ceased to burn in all the eight long years.

Neighbors, once friendly and trusting, thereafter passed them by with sidelong eyes. Groups broke up at their approach, or drew so close together that no room remained for so much as a greeting word. No one openly said to them "Thief!" No one quite dared. Not even the men whose own money was gone — their part of the one hundred and fifty-nine dollars, that great sum, standing for so much hard toil. But, more cruel than any bitter word, stung the silent accusation of their world.

The Constable had sought for the robber. Yes. So they had been told. But nothing, no one, had been found. And now, after all these years, there had been changes in the community, of course. Families had moved away. Other families had come. The story had smouldered low — sometimes it seemed almost died out. And still now and again the embers glowed. Oh! the pain! the pain!

"And Annie?" asked the Corporal.

"Yes — our Annie — our little girl. Ah! if you knew how my man loved that one! How he had worked and planned for her — for all he wanted for her in this big country where all that is good is free!

But that black cloud that swallowed all our life took our Annie too. That very day it settled over her. And she, who should have grown up in good life, was — was more and more — changed — from that time on. So — oh, you *could n't* really wonder at what happened, could you? She — she — she left us. Just before she was seventeen years old."

Tears flooded the mother's cheeks. With twitching lips she seemed to await the Corporal's reply.

"Where did she go?" he asked, beneath his voice.

The woman murmured a broken phrase.

For an instant the Corporal dropped his gaze. Then, rising, he took her hand.

"Forgive me," he said, a little hoarsely. "You were right. It *is* too late. Good-bye — and — may Heaven forgive us all!"

But, as he tramped down the road, scattering the ducks, the hens, and the puppies, exciting the round-faced towheads at the gates, his mind of a State Police officer began to work again. Too late? Was it ever too late to reach after Justice, however remote, however apart she seemed to stand? Who had been village Constable eight years back? That much he remembered, having learned it in his early survey of the past: The village Constable, then, had been Mike Deramme.

So away to Mike Deramme he hastened now.

"Mike," said he, "you remember that case eight years past come next November, when a little Polish girl, Annie Voichek by name, was robbed of a bunch of pays, over between Highlands and Drifton, on her way home from Jeddo?"

"Why — yes," answered Mike. "I guess I know what you mean."

"Who did it?"

"Well, I always thought, myself, the Whistler done it."

"The Whistler?"

"Yep. — Seems like I'd partly forgotten the thing, it's all so long ago. But it's comin' back to me now. — There was this Hunky miner hunted me up one afternoon. See? And he said his little girl had been robbed of this here bunch of pays out near Drifton Park, like you say. So I hustled across. And right *at* the Park I lit onto two boys, that had just come down off the mountain. And I ask the boys if they'd met anybody over there. And they said yes, they met the Italian Whistler on the mountain. And they said the Whistler told 'em, 'If you two don't get out quick, I'll kill you in your tracks.'

"Then I went on to Jeddo and seen the company cashier. And he told me that that very afternoon, while he was giving the little girl the cash, the Whistler had been standing by, looking on."

"And who was the Whistler?"

"Oh, everybody called him that. He was a Wap that could whistle so well that they hired him, off and on, to whistle solos with a band. Alfonso Passo's his real name."

"Alfonso Passo. — Well, and then what did you do?"

"I searched around the mountain and did n't find nothing. Then I come to Freeland and went to the house where the Whistler lived, to arrest him.

But he was n't there. Then I began hunting for him — hunted for four or five weeks and could n't see him at all. And that was the end of it.

"Oh, at the time I reckoned I *could* have located him — maybe in Berwick, where he belonged to a band, maybe somewheres else. But there was n't any funds to pay my expenses travelling around, see? Constables don't have no such. So, I had to let him go."

"Did you ever see him again?"

"Why, I seen him right here in Freeland only three or four months ago. But of course I did n't arrest him then; was n't Constable any more."

"Why did n't you put Mike Lupotka wise to it — let him do the trick?"

"Never once thought of such a thing. *He* was Constable, not me, was n't he? 'T was n't *my* funeral. I did n't bother my head about it — did n't give it a thought."

Corporal Freeman groaned. "And yet, you're a good man, Mike — a very good man, as everybody knows," he said.

Then he struck a bee-line for the Freeland Central Hotel. Looking down the tilted Council chairs in the office windows, he fixed an eye on Frank Malloy, prosperous tailor and County Detective, and beckoned him out.

"Frank," he murmured. "You come with me. I've a story to tell you."

Rough-hewn and brief though that story was, when it came to its end something very like tears stood in Malloy's unaccustomed eyes.

"Leave me in on this here," he growled — "it's the least you can do after tearin' a man's heart out by the roots. Come on. We'll tackle the job together."

And they did.

Their first step they took that very Monday night — a step that should save leeway for whatever might come thereafter; they lodged before Justice James Malloy an information of highway robbery against Alfonso Passo, just being released from jail. And Justice James Malloy held Alfonso Passo on that charge, committing him without bail.

The trial fell on November 21st, just fifty-one days later, before Judge Peter O'Boyle, of the Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas, sitting at Wilkes-Barre. And in those fifty-one days Frank Malloy worked hard. But Corporal Freeman worked, nay, slaved, by day and by night, in season and out of season, with all his heart and mind and soul and strength. And he covered a deal of ground.

For the picture of a baby girl alone in the dusk in a solitary place, struggling with a demon at the mouth of a cave, had taken possession of his whole being. And the name of her present lot — that last word wrung from her mother's quivering lips — had sealed him to her cause of retribution, justice, mercy, as surely as any accolade of Arthur's blade.

No need, here, to go into the details of the trial. The attorneys for the defence fought a skilful fight, stiff and long. But the case of the State Police was perfect — so truly perfect, measured even by their own strict standard, that the Judge himself, as he

afterward confessed, half-thought something might be wrong.

"Never before, in all my long observation of State Police officers in my court," said Judge O'Boyle, "had I seen one who seemed, as did this particular officer, this Corporal Freeman, personally desirous to convict the accused. Ordinarily their bearing is entirely impersonal, colorless. They incline to give the prisoner all the benefit of any doubt. But this man told his story with a positiveness, an almost vehemence, so extraordinary — he replied to all questions and cross-examinations with an accuracy so exact, that his attitude created a suspicion in my mind. Yet, while I did my best to discover in him any motive, any tendency to tinge his testimony. I could find no trace of that at all. Evidently the simple truth was that he had so thoroughly cleared his own mind, so convinced himself of a wrong to right, and so solidly built his case that he was incapable of slipping in it anywhere."

Mike Lupotka took the stand, Frank Malloy, Justice Malloy, Mike Deramme, the Passos, man and wife — the last, of course, called by the defence. Examinations. Cross-examinations. Recalls.

The whole thing, contended the defence, took its rise, the whole charge originally rested, on the wife's testimony against her husband given on a Sunday afternoon fifty-two days ago. And the law holds that a wife may not testify against her husband.

Indisputably a wife may not testify against her husband, in court. But — and here the Court underscored both the legal knowledge and the quick wit

of the State Police officer — Corporal Freeman, on that Sunday afternoon fifty-two days ago, being present for quite another purpose, and seeing the wife about to bear witness against her husband, had stopped her short *until he had brought into the room her husband himself.* So that Jennie Passo's story of her husband's crime of highway robbery had been told, unsolicited, and not only in the presence of a County Detective and of a State Police officer, but also in the presence of the accused man himself. And the accused, fully hearing and being challenged to reply, had by silence acquiesced in the truth of the charge. Thus, by wisdom, was inadmissible testimony transformed into positive evidence.

The defence showed the wanderings of the man — showed that although he had fled back to New York, after his one night's return to Freeland, in November, 1909; although he had since lived in Brooklyn, in Florida, in Connecticut, he had also, in that period, sojourned in Berwick, in Pittston, and in other Pennsylvania towns, whether as a musician or as a laborer of sorts. Therefore, argued the defence, the Statute of Limitations freed him. It had run against him for more than five years, and the matter was outlawed now. Would the Court so charge the jury?

No. For the Court held that a man who, being under charge of crime committed in a given community, and being sought therefor by officers of the peace, flees that community, remains in practical hiding and returns only by stealth, cannot thereby acquire the shelter of the law.

Through it all, Alfonso Passo sat in his place, smug, self-conscious, nonchalant. At their best they could not identify their robber. After so many years there was certainly no one to do that. So what did it matter to him what else they proved, or ruled, or quarrelled or gossipped about! He ran his long, slender fingers through his curls, stroked his sweeping moustache, flashed his small, bright eyes in smiling, sidewise glances. Some vain little "bohemian" lady-killer, he looked, some dripper of idiotic verse, some sort of musical Cheap-John — but a coal miner, a laborer, even a respectable highwayman, never in the world.

Jennie, his wife, all her ephemeral courage spent, took the stand in his defence. Her testimony was meant to prove his title to freedom under the Statute of Limitations. She answered counsel's questions like a well-trained machine. The multitudinous family flittings fell from her tongue with a dry, mechanical click. Through it all glared the fact that her very life was at stake.

And yet, as she began to speak, the husband flung up his hand and made before her some lightning gesture that only an Italian could read. As she saw it, her face turned ghastly. Her voice failed. For a moment she seemed about to faint.

Again this Passo, with his sidelong eyes and his sleek, secretive smile, stroked his great moustache, apparently content. Content, for his wife was his terrified serf. And to-day he occupied his public's view. To-night his picture would be in the papers, maybe. And at their best they could never identify

their robber. There was certainly no one to do that.

Then, of a sudden, fell a curious pause. Frank Malloy, back among the crowd, began to breathe hard. Corporal Freeman, in front, stared into space with inexpressive gaze, sitting as straight as Rameses at Aboo Simbel. But does Rameses at Aboo Simbel hear the hammering of his pulse? A kind of electric current without apparent source swept through the place, carrying with it an inexplicable hush.

Mr. Turner, prosecutor for the Commonwealth, had said some little thing — few, if any, heard what. The Clerk of the Court had spoken. No one had caught the words. And yet — something was going to happen. Now. The very doors and benches must have felt as much as that — the very gavel, in its wooden heart.

Somewhere a door opened and shut. Like a breeze in ripe standing grain, a stir swept over the people. They turned to look. A slight, black-robed figure, a woman with bowed head, was floating down the room. A veil completely hid her face. She reached the witness-stand, and turned to confront the Judge. A nun.

They brought her the Bible. She laid her hand upon it, and, with a spirit new to that Court, raised her eyes in reverence as she repeated the words of the oath. Then they saw her countenance — and from all over the crowded room rose a little rustling sound — the intake of breath.

To attempt to tell in words how beautiful she was — *is* — seems in itself almost a sacrilege. One would rather think of the sweetest saint ever drawn by the

most ethereal of all the Primitives, and say: Such was his vision when he painted this.

Her face was the face of a young angel born in Paradise and knowing naught beyond the gardens of God. From the day of her birth, you would say, the Blessed Lady herself must have held her in special keeping. No thought or word but of happy praise untroubled could ever have reached her ears or touched her soul. Innocence, peace, obedience, ignorance of the world, and a sort of luminous child-angel blessedness, softly shone from where she stood. And this is no fancy phrasing, but the simple truth concerning her — the simple, literal, unornamented truth.

No one had time to think. There were lumps in men's throats, clouds over men's eyes, in men's hearts, sudden imperative stirrings of that eternal Presence that never denies the countersign to Divine Love. If a habited nun had ever before appeared in a criminal court no one recalled it. The very fact itself was sensational. Yet it was not that, but rather her tender, intimate perfection, her look of the very essence of innocence, revealed for a moment by gracious favor of the cradling Hand, that broke men's hearts as, forgetting themselves and the world around, they gazed at her.

She was twenty years old, she said, answering the questions of the Prosecutor like an exquisite child, full of gentle humility. Eight years ago she had lived in her parents' home — at Highlands. Her name — had been Annie Voichek.

And then, led by the queries of the attorney, she told in quiet, careful words, without resentment,

without heat, without the slightest echo of personal feeling, all the history of the black November day in 1909.

As cross-examination began, such of the audience as was aware of its surroundings felt a sort of anxious, warning tension contract all nerves. The defence was observing a courtesy rare in practice — was beyond reproach. And yet, when it put a question designed to confuse, it was big Frank Malloy himself, that hardened citizen, who, with a curse in his teeth, half-rose from his seat, his two fists clenched and his chin thrust out like the prow of a battleship.

Mike Lupotka, beside him, laid a hasty hand on his arm. Justice Malloy, from the other side, leaned over with a soothing word:

"Steady, there, Frank. Remember — it's his privilege."

But Malloy's eyes were wet, and Malloy's voice shook with single-minded rage as he ripped back:

"That fellow's name is Blumenthal. *Let* him give the blessed little saint up there the first mean word out of him — and — *there's Irish in this room will smash his nut!*"

But now, the one great question: By any chance, after so long an interval, could she possibly identify the man?

Describing that pitiful day so long ago, she had told the Court of her steady, purposeful gaze into the face of her assailant — into the face of the unknown being that had attacked her by the cave. Three minutes it had lasted, perhaps. She was not sure. It had seemed as much as that.

But never, she affirmed, had she seen him since. And eight long years had gone between.

"Do you see that man in this place to-day?" slowly and clearly the Prosecutor's question sounded through the chamber.

The nun raised her beautiful eyes, for the first time looking around the room. Then her gaze lowered to her own clasped hands. Standing quite motionless, her stately draperies flowing around her, she made no reply.

Alfonso Passo, with the mastery of feature common to his kind, had cleared his face of every sign of concern. He might have been the most casual stranger to the case, killing time where he sat, till this dull matter should have run its course. Even those close by him could observe no trace of anxiety in his bearing — no sign to distinguish him from any other of the many Italians in the room.

"Do you see the man in this place to-day?" quietly the Prosecutor repeated.

Still no answer.

Then Judge O'Boyle himself, leaning forward in his chair, asked gently:

"Do you understand the question?"

With a catch of the breath, she looked up at the Judge, and her look and her way were full of childlike appeal.

"Yes, sir, I understand," she replied. "But will what I answer now — will it — *condemn* — that man?"

"You must answer, yes or no. Do you see the man in this place to-day?"

Three things now clearly declared themselves concerning her: first, that she felt in its full weight the solemn responsibility so squarely laid upon her shoulders; second, that she shrank with the strongest reluctance from the chance of hurting the prisoner or any creature; and, third, that she would loyally obey the Court and tell the whole truth if so commanded.

For an instant she bowed her head, while her lips moved faintly. Then she looked up, calm, sure, straight across the room to where Passo yawned and lounged.

"*There is the man,*" she said.

With one horrible, shapeless howl, like a wild beast trapped, Alfonso Passo, robber, covered his face with his hands.

In point of word and form there was more to the case, of course. But not one other thing in point of fact. Nothing could shake the case for the Commonwealth. The jury withdrew merely in order to hasten back. The Judge, in due season, gave sentence with a peculiar, clear-cut zest. And those who heard him felt, rejoicing, that his comments added the last ripe touch to a perfect thing.

Mrs. Voichek, over in the little red house on Highlands hill, sat with tears running down her cheeks.

"Thank God," she sobbed, when they brought the news to her, "we can all hold up our heads again. Our good name is cleared at last."

And she told again how her twelve-year-old Annie, after that one bad hour, the root of all the sorrow of

the years to come, had more and more withdrawn from the common life until at last they had had to give her up — to let her go, into the seclusion for which she yearned.

But Corporal Freeman, working late that night with brush, sponge, and curry-comb, felt somehow vaguely sad. So, as men will, he took occasion to unburden his heart to his closest friend.

"Boston," he whispered, into one silky brown, sharp-pricked ear, "stop your nuzzling. This is n't sugar I'm giving you, but facts, and the sooner you swallow them, the happier you'll be. So listen here: *You and I have got to come down to brass tacks and common casualties, now.* And our business is, not to hand-pick jobs, but to tackle the whole darn bunch. Most likely we'll never even see another Baby Saint, you and me. All the same, when *she* lays her little head on the pillow to-night, she won't have a worry left in the world, God bless her! Boston, *are n't you proud?*"

Recorder's Note: In this account, the names "Voichek," "Deramme" and "Blumenthal" are substitutes for the actual names of the persons on whom they are bestowed. All other details are in accordance with fact.

VI

THE BLAZING MOUNTAIN

On Friday, April 2, 1920, the following communication, via the United States mails, duly reached its address:

Department of State Police
Harrisburg, Pa.

April 1, 1920.

To the Commanding Officer,
Troop A, State Police,
Greensburg, Pa.

Sir:

Relative to the enclosed "Black Hand" letter and other enclosures, you will detail a man on this case immediately.

(Signed) William E. Mair
Deputy Superintendent

The enclosures mentioned began with the complaint of one Charles Thomas, State Game Protector. Disastrous fires, said Thomas, fires of unknown origin, were sweeping the country for which he stood responsible. Disastrous letters, furthermore — letters threatening his life should he stir into the mountains to check the fires — were dropping into his hands from unknown sources. Therefore he appealed for help to the State Game Commissioner. And the State Game Commissioner, knowing his way about the world, now and hereby referred that appeal, together with the documents in the case, to the Pennsylvania State Police Force.

The first of the documents in the case, crudely scrawled in lead-pencil on common blue-lined paper, read thus:

I am warning you, the fire-warden, to hide under the rock within 20 feet of this tree $500 or i will set fire to all your forests. There is big timber over the mountain. i too will burn that unless you pay me the 500 and by the first of April. i will fire the woods until i get the 500. i will burn millions of dollars worth of timber. If you don't give me the 500 each of the exceeding fires i set will be on more and biger timber.

The Fire Bug.

The second:

This is my last warning. Leave me five hundred dollars under that rock where i mentioned before or i will fire the whole forest at once and shoot you and your men if they attempt to put it out and leave it the money there before April 1st if you want to be a live man April 30 for i will shoot you. Get the money off the State or the owners of the forests and get it damn quick for i am going out west and nead the money.

Captain Herbert Smith, commanding "A" Troop, Pennsylvania State Police, read the whole sheaf attentively. Then, via First Sergeant Murphy, he summoned Sergeant Jacob C. Mauk and gave orders: Sergeant Mauk would proceed at once to Good Luck, Fayette County, the residence of Mr. Charles Thomas, Game Protector, and investigate the case. Plain clothes.

Out from his grey uniform into most non-committal mufti, Sergeant Mauk accordingly transferred his wiry bulk. And he took the next train (transpor-

tation request No. 19277) to Uniontown; and from Uniontown the trolley southwest to Good Luck (cash fare twenty cents), arriving toward the end of the afternoon.

Now Good Luck is a reasonable little village gathered into the skirts of "the mountain" as chickens gather to a hovering hen. And Sergeant Mauk, as best suited his purpose, had never had personal dealings with Good Luck before.

So he asked his way through the settlement, on to its outermost eastern fringe, where Charles Thomas's bit of a house, last of the lot save two far stragglers, perched slantwise on a slanting field to peer with its back windows straight into the mountain wall.

But Thomas was not at home — had left town — would not return until the next morning, so his wife affirmed. With clear regret she affirmed it, deploring her husband's absence, in circumstances so parlous, from under her guardian eye; deploring as earnestly any delay in the work of the State Police.

And she hoped that one John Tiernan, friend and fellow-townsman, might be, in the interval, of some good use.

Tiernan, it proved, was a man of comforts, holding a well-padded county job. But he was also a big, hearty soul who had once been a forest warden. The woods and their business still held his fancy; and Charles Thomas's troubles aroused his interest with a retrospective lure. The chance to dilate upon these things to a perfect listener came now like elixir, and with zest he poured forth all that he could surmise plus all that he thought he knew.

Since the twenty-fourth day of March, he said, fires had been gnawing the mountains. Some the offspring of the first to start, others apparently freshly set. And all, he believed, of incendiary birth. In fact the greater part of that whole section had been burned over. And although some very valuable timber tracts yet remained, it was reasonable to suppose that they, too, would disappear shortly, since new fires were almost daily lighted.

Did he suspect any one?

Well — that was hard to say. Yet he *would* say:— For the life of him he could not but think of Philo Bean. Philo was kind of a run-out sort of chap who lived up on the mountain, away by himself. And the queer thing was that never once had he come out to fight any of these fires, not even the ones that threatened his own cabin.

Oh, yes, of course, he *might* be innocent — yet — someway — Mr. Tiernan's mind still would turn, in its search for the guilty, to that figure of Philo Bean. And the letters that Thomas had been getting were *bad*.

Next morning Mr. Thomas came home from his journey — home to his immediate woes. And the sight of Sergeant Mauk, sharp-set, cool, and quiet, there before him, cast him loose upon a sea of relief. For Thomas was designed by nature for a man of peace. He was not over five feet three inches tall nor was he any wider than he had to be to breathe. He would have deprecated to the limit incurring any rash man's wrath.

And the "Black Hand" letters, while undeniably distending him with a certain sense of importance,

at the same time caused his soul to feel like a rabbit whom many pursue.

"These letters — they certainly were awful," he whispered. "I got more, too, since them I sent in. See here!" And with eager, shaking fingers he drew a little packet from beneath the general débris in his table drawer.

Mauk, unfolding the grimy scraps, read:

Notice to Warden Thomas. Leave me $500 under the stoan along the road below the oak tree below the Devil's Jumping Off Place. I will continue to fire the mountains. i help you fite although I am your enemy i am your rite-hand man you trust me. I am faithful while i am with you but your enemy aloan.

Saturday March 27, 1920.

Warning—keep out of the mountains or i will shoot you.

Then another:

Notice to Fire Warden. I have asked you for $500 and you have left no answer i will continue to set fires until i get it i helped you put out the other fires. I was your rite hand man. I was there to hear your plans. It was me who Philo Bean saw down by the fire setting a fire and if you dont leave me $500 under the stoan you will be in danger of me i will shoot and scare your helpers and you will have no one. You need not call again for your friendly enemy for he will not go. This is my last warning to you Captain Thomas.

Wrote March 27 AM

"How do you get these things?" asked the Sergeant, as he finished the sixth and last loose-jointed scrawl.

"Different ways," the Game Protector replied. "That last one you read was settin' on a rock at the

Devil's Jumping Off Place. Another was stickin' up in a stump near the Cave Road. There was one down in the hollow by the pen where I go to feed the pheasants and the quail. Then the Boy Scouts was out for a hike with school-teacher on the mountain, and they found two and brought 'em in."

"Who do you think wrote them, Mr. Thomas?"

"Oh, *I* could n't tell you — could n't guess."

"Have you no suspicion at all as to who sets the fires?"

The Game Protector looked down at his boots, up at the picture-moulding, sidewise at the windows and doors, straight, for one brief moment, at Mauk. Then, with the usual ceremony he shifted his quid, drew his chair close to that of the Sergeant, screwed his eyelids almost shut, dropped his voice to its ghost, and breathed:

"If I was to name a name to you, sir — in confidence, sir, in confidence — that name would be — *Philo Bean.*

"Why? Well — Philo lives up there. And he appears to me to be just the kind of a feller that *would* do that kind of work. Then, Sunday, there was a lot of girls out walkin' in the mountains, like they do pleasant days, and one of 'em, Emma Louisa Black, she seen a feller with a sort of khaki coat on, an' an axe on his shoulder, and a dog. And just before she seen him, she seen where a forest fire had started. Emma Louisa Black did n't see this feller's face, for his back was turned and he was quite a piece away. But my opinion is, that man was Philo Bean. Philo always has a dog, and like's not carries an axe

when he goes in the bush. Anyway, it's what a chap like him might do. And there ain't nobody else that would. Not a darn one."

"Have you been up, yourself, hunting for the man?"

"Who, *me?*" exclaimed the Protector, in undisguised amazement. "After gettin' them letters?... *me?*"

"Well, has any one been up there on the job?"

"Oh, yes. The County Detective, he come, and he hired a man to watch the mountains and see if he could catch this chap. He hired Jeff Tole. Lived around here all his life, Jeff has. He's in the woods now, I understand. And the County Detective says he expects results. But someway — Jeff's a good man all right, understand — I don't say he ain't — but I feel a heap better, myself, since *you* came — a whole heap better."

So Sergeant Mauk, of "A" Troop, Pennsylvania State Police, quitting the Protector's presence, strolled up and away into the fastnesses.

Fastnesses indeed they proved. Wild, with all the heavenly savagery of unpeopled forest, beautiful with all the beauty of the natural world. Lakelets he found, held high aloft in cup-like rocky ledges. And the cave of which one "Black Hand" letter spoke — a single passage running back for undetermined miles into the roots of the hills. And the Devil's Jumping Off Place itself — a sheer, mad, gorgeous precipice, plunging from wood to wood. And then, alas, smouldering stretches left behind the fires, jagged with poor, charred, limbless spikes that had been trees, dyed inky black with smudge

and smut, sweet with the cruel, piercing sweetness of beauty vanished into smoke.

Taking all in all, in the last few days not less than ten thousand acres had been utterly destroyed — ten thousand acres of the best timber in that whole country — all in the prime of life. The loss, whether of beauty or of wild life or of property value, was intolerable. And even at that very moment, so Mauk said to himself as he climbed, the public enemy might be setting the match to another train of destruction.

The sun, by now, stood almost at the top of its arc. The hamlet in the folds of the mountain's skirt lay some three miles down and away. And although the Sergeant's head had been accumulating just observations at a fair rate of speed, the Sergeant's eyes since he left the Protector's presence had failed to discern one specimen of the human race. It might have been Anno Domini 1491.

Then, suddenly, with a crisp bend in the ledge he was following, a new picture flashed close to his gaze — a picture as queer, as whimsical as an Alice-in-Wonderland situation or a fantasy in Russian pantomime.

A chasm. Perched on its hither verge, dominating the world of vision, three huge, solemn, separate rocks — separate, yet set together, the same in shape and size and placement. As big as houses, every one, and as sharp and stiff of outline. Dark at the base, but at their summits almost purely white — shining like snow in the noonday sun. On the top of the central rock, a figure — a man.

Clear-etched against the brilliant sky, he stood erect in the attitude of Napoleon at gaze, eyes fixed afar, legs wide apart, arms folded. He was big. His body was clothed in hunter's garments, and he appeared to be cumbered with much rather lumpish luggage.

Mauk regarded him for a moment, appraising. Then he spoke:

"Hi!"

Like a statue jolted into life by an over-brusque galvanic shock, the figure wheeled, snatching at its side. Another second and it stood tense, clutching something within its two hands, peering vaguely in Mauk's direction.

"Come down," observed Mauk. And although he said only that, adding nothing of authority, whether of name, of office, or of gun-metal, the figure came down as directed. Came quickly down, over the shoulder of the rock, with much crashing of heels, much slipping and sliding of resonant stone-chips. Stood before the Sergeant, breathing heavily.

At a guess, he was sixty years old. His hair, a thick, straight shock, was white, like his great moustache of a walrus. Over his high, flat cheek-bones little eyes gleamed pale through slantwise slits in a red-bronze maze of weather-seams. He may have been six feet tall, plus something. And no joint about him, not even the jaw, seemed to fit quite true in its socket.

Grime like an ancient enamel enveiled him with proof that no water but rain ever touched him. The great pockets of his oil-skin coat bulged ungainly; out from one protruded the blue-grey claws of a

chicken. Two big hunting-bags hung crossed from his shoulders, each jammed to bursting with Heaven knows what. Exactly in the front of his belt swung a holster, from which, buccaneer fashion, reared the stock of a huge old duelling pistol. Under one arm he carried a spy-glass, young brother to a cannon. And his two hands still grasped the object they had snatched when Mauk first startled him.

It was a camera — a new and rather sizeable camera.

"My name's Mauk," observed the Sergeant, in overture. "Mighty interesting gun you have there, sir."

"I'm Mr. Jefferson Tole," the other replied, a certain reserve of importance seeming to enrich the phrase. "Pleased to meet you, sir. Reckon you're right about this here gun. You won't see many like it," and he handed it over for inspection.

"I'm interested in timber-land, myself," pursued the Sergeant. "Looks as if there'd been fires around here."

"Fires! *Now* you're *talkin'! Fires!* Why, sometimes it seems like this whole country'd go! But"— and here Mr. Jefferson Tole, receiving back his weapon, reached out for the Sergeant's buttonhole — "since you're interested in timber, you might like to know who I really am. I'm a deteckertive, that's all!" And he retreated a step to enjoy the effect of spicy news. "Secret service, sir! Secret service! — I'm hired to hunt this here fire-bug, and *I'm goin' to get him.*"

"That certainly is interesting" — Mauk's manner implied his respect — "Now, if it is n't too much to ask, how does a man go about such work?"

"Perfectly simple," the detective replied. "All these things are simple, if you just once get the idea. I happen to be a trapper by trade. But I always had leanin's toward deteckertive work, though this is the first chance I ever got to show what I could do. Guess the Governor must have heard about me, off mountain — they do say he's a wonder, this here Governor Sproul. He could n't have hired another man anywhere, that would have handled this job like me. Besides" — and here Mr. Tole began to whisper — "besides, I know already who sets this timber burnin'!"

"You don't!" exclaimed Mauk, all admiration. "Well, I suppose you're just teasing him, cat-and-mouse fashion — biding your time, as they say you big men do."

"That might be it, and then again it might n't." The sleuth screwed his wrinkles into an expression of bottomless cunning. "You see, every case is different; I'm playin' this feller on a line, I am. I know him, sir, as well as I know you. But proof's what *I* want. I'm after the proof. What was I doin' when you came along, I ask you; was n't I searchin' out the land from a high place? Well, if I'd seen anything to look at, I'd have slapped this here ole spy-glass bang onto it. And *if it was him*, why, then I'd have lit out for him, you bet, like a streak of greased lightnin'! But quiet, sir, quiet, till I'd snuck up *close!*"

"Gosh!" exclaimed the Sergeant. "Poor devil! It makes my flesh creep for him. Are you going to shoot? Or will you just walk him in to jail alive, at

the end of your gun? I suppose you've got handcuffs and rope in one of those bags?"

"Who, me?" . . . and a sudden shade of alarm seemed to tinge the sleuth's deprecation. "Oh, no — *that* ain't my method. Not at all. I ain't goin' to *arrest* him. Nothin' as crude as that. All *I* want's his photograph. Jest to sneak up quiet and get his photograph. Took in the act. *Him settin' the match.* See? His very picter and likeness, snapped red-handed. That's *my* job, and that's my idee. Once I got *that*, the real fine work's finished. Then they can get State Cops or any sort of common run to do the plain arrestin'."

"Did you get my picture, from up on top of that rock?"

"No. You seen me first."

"Any fresh fires started since you got to work?" inquired Mauk.

"Oh, yes. They did n't happen to be where I was, though. But I'll get Philo Bean soon — sure's shootin' — and I'll get him with the goods on him."

"Philo Bean?"

"Don't you know Philo?"

"I've heard of him."

"Well, I reckon you ain't heard no good. If Philo's got a friend in the world *I* never run acrost him."

"What's the matter with Philo?"

"What *ain't* the matter with him! I've known him all his life. He's a snooper — that's what he is. A gol-dum, white-livered snooper. No use to nobody."

"Ever committed any crime?"

"Well — once he stole a mink out of my trap. And last summer he put poison out on the mountain. For dogs. *How do I know he did?* Because poison was put, and they ain't anybody else mean enough to put it. That's why, and reason enough, too. Then he up and writes me a letter blaming *me* for doin' it! No — the letter wa'n't signed — but nobody but Philo could be skate enough to write a letter like that. An' I asked him flat to his face if he wrote it, and he did n't say yes and he did n't say no. So I wrote him one back — a pretty rank one, *I* tell you — lettin' him know what's coming to him. No — I did n't sign it. What do you take me for? But I toted it over and left it on the board on top of his spring, so'd he'd sure find it, first time he come to get water.

"Oh, he's been like that all his life, just *mean*, Philo has. And that's how I come to know he's the feller that writes Charlie Thomas these blackmailin' letters, and that is how I know he's the feller that sets these fires. They ain't nobody else *to* do it."

"Awful, is n't it!" Mauk sympathized. "Well — I must n't keep you any longer. Your job's too important. Glad to have met you, Mr. Tole. Good luck to you! Good-by!"

"And about now's the time," he added silently, as he slid on along through the laurel banks, "that I take a look myself at our friend Philo Bean."

Of the Protector of Game he had that morning inquired how to find Philo's abode. How to find some particular chipmunk's hole would have been scarcely more difficult to grasp. But not on this

third day of April, 1920, was Sergeant Jacob Mauk to make first acquaintance with woodlands. And so, by mid-afternoon, he stood, under cover of brush, high up near the summit of the mountain, looking at the very thing he sought.

In an angle of the ascent, just where a bit of plateau-like shoulder meets an upward-slanting rock wall, about an acre of land had been cleared. Not recently, for the ragged stumps that studded it showed black with rot and silver-grey with weather; not recently, for the stones that had been gathered from it and which now lay heaped against the mountain's side, had almost lost their color of stone, under thick green moss and red and brown and yellow fungi. At first one scarcely knew it for a house, this little rock-heap. Its very shape disguised it, for it hung like any other wild thing's nest, making use of the slope for its rearward wall, and melting into the mountain's substance. The chimney, at one end, might almost have been a bit of out-crop ledge, half-hidden by downward-sweeping boughs of an ancient hemlock that overlaid the roof. And the texture of its sides was blurred and broken by irregular grey-green patches which only closer view could reveal as sheaves of dried herbs, swinging from the eaves.

Old hand though he was, the Sergeant could not deny a moment's pause in tribute to the aspect of the place. The whole thing looked magical — as if Snow-White and Rose-Red might be imprisoned there.

Yet, when he reached the door, it was without expectation of greeting romance on the threshold. And

the man that answered his knock was a very familiar type, indeed.

Perhaps twenty-four years old. Tallish, lean, dun-haired, blue-eyed, good-looking in his way, with the expression of an honest, ingenuously speculative dog. A flannel shirt that once had been brown, hanging loose at the throat. Ragged trousers weathered to the color of stubble sod in winter, stuck into the tops of high woodsman's boots. Primitive; yet suspicious only as are all border-land creatures. Co-citizen with the rabbit; co-forager with the fox.

"Step in, stranger," he said.

Mauk entered — to snatch that single glance that told him all he cared to learn of the place. Two little rooms; no second story, not even a loft. In each room a couch, spread with old quilts and skins. Then a bench, a table, three chairs and a stool, a lamp, and a few pots, pans, and dishes. Over in the corner, by the hearth, a very aged woman, bent nearly double as she stood leaning on her stick, dimly peering through the smoke of the little black pipe gripped between her sunken lips.

Said the visitor: "My name's Mauk. I'm taking a look over the mountain. Interested in timber-land. Thought I'd step in and tell you good evening, and maybe hunt up your spring and get a drink, going past."

"Sure, and welcome," answered the hillsman, cordially enough. "Come on down and I'll show you. My name's Bean — Philo Bean, and we got the best spring in the country."

"Snug little place, this," observed the Sergeant as they walked; "looks like it had been here always."

He was killing time now, till they should have left the house behind — putting distance, between his man and a probable rifle behind the door, before opening delicate topics.

"Well, I don't know how old the shack is, but I was born here, mother says, and I reckon she don't remember any other home. Just her and me's lived here alone, always. Yes, it's mighty snug. Suits us all right, anyway. Mother, she raises a few potatoes and such truck, here in the clearin', come summer. An' I shoot all the meat we want. An' we trade the skins for what else we use. And if we need a little cash, why, I go over to Six-Oven Mine, 'cross mountain, and do a day's work. But that ain't often. We get on mighty comfortable — all but the fires."

"Fires?" Mauk's voice carried invitation.

"Ain't you heard? Fires! Why, look here — " and the mountaineer suddenly left the path to scramble aboard a big rock that, as it proved, commanded a stretch of the slope below. All black — black and charred and killed. Hundreds of acres swept bare.

"Look!" — the young man pointed eagerly. "See the pond down there? That bog-hole? Well, one day about a week ago — last Monday, it was, just about this time — I was comin' down to the spring, like we are now — and I stepped out, just like this — I don't know why — onto this here rock — and I seen a fire startin' right down beside that same pond. A fair catch it had got already — and while I was lookin' I heard somebody start runnin' — runnin' away from where that fire was, away down the hill toward the town. And the feller that run was talkin'

and callin' — but whether he was just callin' his dawg, I could n't make out, on account of him bein' so far away.

"And *that* was the big fire — the one that took off all that pretty stand of timber — And *that* was the feller that started the blaze."

"Don't it beat the Dutch!" exclaimed the Sergeant. "Of course nobody 'll ever find out who it was, though! Might as well hunt a cricket in a brier-patch."

"Well, I don't know." The woodsman hesitated, visibly torn between natural caution and a human willingness to shine. "What would you say, now, if I was to tell you who it was?"

Mauk gazed back at him with respectful wonder.

"Could *you* do *that?*" he breathed.

"The man that set that fire, and all the fires — he's got a name. An' that name's Jeff Tole. Jeff's a trapper from down mountain, and *Jeff done it*, if you want to know."

"How in the world did you come to find out, Mr. Bean?"

"How? — Why, stranger, I did n't have to find out. Jeff 's the meanest cuss in this county and the only man, by fifty jugfuls, mean enough to do a job like that. *Know* who did it? — Why, I know Jeff. What more'd I need?

"All the same," he ran on, "Jeff 's a wise cuss — an' they 'll have a hard job catchin' *him* up! I heard the Game Protector got some letters, left around the woods — bad letters, askin' for money and promisin' to set more fires if the money did n't show up.

Jeff *would* write letters like that — an' leave 'em around up here in my country where he don't belong, just to put folks off thinkin' of him. Why, he put a letter right down here at this spring onct — a regular slang letter, sayin' that I was a dog poisoner and a whole lot more lies. Awful!"

"Did he sign his name to it?"

"Who? Jeff? — Not much he did n't. Jeff's too wise. But I knew he done it, all the same. Nobody but him would."

"Did you write him one back?"

"Well, stranger, you see, I ain't never been to school. Readin' and writin' never come my way. Jeff's letter? Oh, I got a feller that was along huntin' to read Jeff's letter out to me."

"Must be right tough work, fighting fire. I expect you always turn out to help, Mr. Bean, living up here among it as you do."

"No," answered the mountaineer. "It ain't never just headed onto us yet. There's plenty of valley folks for fire-fightin' — and I ain't fond of crowds. I keep away and mind my own business. Never could stand a crowd."

"Just go around by yourself, with your dog and your gun, I reckon."

The mountaineer's face fell. "My dawg — he — he died. Last winter. I ain't got any now. Oh, yes, I s'pose I could get one, easy enough. But somehow — I did n't know a man could — miss — just a dawg — like I miss mine. Somehow, I don't seem to want another. Not yet, anyway." And the look in the boy's eyes, with the undertone of his

voice, said "truth" to an ear trained to split such signs to hair's breadths.

Dusk was falling as the Sergeant, quitting the scene of his day's endeavors, approached the mountain's nethermost slope and saw the village lights come out — one by one come out — grow in number, softly shining, like fireflies at play, in the heart of the valley below. And there it was, nearing the settlement, that he overtook another solitary, swinging along in the shadows, glad of a chance to talk.

Jimmy Sheehan was his name — of Good Luck. Occasional worker, as the need of money took him, 'cross-mountain at Six-Oven Mine. Pretty long way to go for a job, but he did n't do it regular — and anyhow he liked the mountain. Pity about all these fires, lately. Burned an awful lot of nice timber. Who done it? Well, folks did seem to think it was a feller named Philo Bean — kind of half-wild chap that lived up out of reach.

"But"—and here Jimmy Sheehan grew somewhat warm — "I reely hate to hear 'em say that because I know it ain't so. Philo was over working at Six-Oven, near me, the days the worst fires broke out. And though they'd answer to that by allowin' he might have fixed a long train, I know he did n't do it. He's simple, and he's wild, but there ain't any harm in him, and he ain't that kind. Only, nobody'll listen to me.

"Who do I think did it? Well, I don't *know*, any more'n you do.

"But, say, look-a-here — Did it ever strike you that fire wardens, judgin' by appearances, ain't

always picked out just for their character? And they ain't paid anything much — and yet they got use for money, like the rest of us. They can hire men at so much an hour, to fight fire. And then they can make out their accounts, statin' they had so many men, workin' so many hours at so much an hour. And they sign it themselves, and they send it in. And the State Commissioner, he sends 'em back a check, by mail, and no questions asked.

"You can figure that out to suit yourself, stranger. Only, *don't talk to me about Philo Bean.*"

At the mouth of the mountain trail, just where it opens into the valley, on the settlement's edge, stands one little lone cottage, a neat, bright, alive-looking small place whose appearance speaks well for its tenant's mind. Twice already Mauk had noticed it — its character and its implication. Now, as he neared it again, seeing a man on the porch, he called out, "Good-evening," added a phrase or two, said, "So-long," to Jimmy Sheehan, and in another moment was sitting on the steps, sharing his tobacco with a new friend.

"You know, Mr. Applebaum," the Sergeant proceeded, introductions duly over, "I've been up on the mountain all day. But you were n't around when I passed this morning."

"All the same, I spied you," Mr. Applebaum chuckled. "I was splittin' wood, around back. You didn't see me, but I had my eye on you, all right."

"Don't much that goes up the pike escape that eye of yours. I'll bet!" Mauk continued, with an air

of sympathy — "nor your memory, either, now, does it? If you had n't seen me again for a week, you could have told anybody what color my coat was, and what I was toting — gun or rod or basket or whatever — and what day it happened, and all that."

"Reckon you're pretty nigh right," Applebaum not slowly agreed.

"Well, it's a faculty a man can cultivate, I suppose," Mauk pursued. "In your case, maybe partly a natural gift, partly practice from living just at this point where so many things pass for a thinking man to observe. But — I don't know — I guess you'd have really to be born to it, at that. Here, have another smoke. Good tobacco? Glad you like it.

"No, as I was saying, it's a gift. Now, I might set here and see a common sight — oh, say, like a man with an axe on his shoulder, go up this trail, and just because it *was* such a reasonable thing to happen I'd forget it the same minute. Maybe next day I would n't recollect a blessed thing about it."

"Well, sir, let's see. Man with an axe. . . . Just that very thing: a man with an axe went up this trail a week ago yesterday mornin'. Had on kind of hunter clothes — khaki — and a cap, and a dog at his heels. That was way back last week — yes, that's true, it was the last day the mountain started burning — and I'll bet there ain't been a man with an axe by here since."

"Now look at that!" exclaimed Mauk, all enthusiasm for the other's feat. "And you did n't know the

chap, either, so the name don't help you. It's wonderful!"

"Well," replied Applebaum, honest in his reluctance — "I can't claim quite that much. The feller was Ray Bingham — but *he* ain't nothin' to notice, when you *do* know him. Jest a boy."

"Lives here?"

"Next house, down the road a piece. Between this and Charlie Thomas's."

And so the talk drifted on, with miscellany, till country bedtime came, and Mauk sought out his lodging.

Next morning, as early as the nature of the task allowed, the amiable stranger "interested in timberlands" again began his work of plucking flowers of fact — plucking delicately, unobtrusively, here one, there one, with discreet foliage of irrelevancies between.

Well, before noon he knew, for example, that Ray Bingham was about fifteen years old; that his people were poor; that, although Ray went no more to school, he rarely did a day's labor; and that his one outstanding trait was a passion for firearms. Without visible means ever to have bought a decent weapon, he nevertheless always had in his possession something that could shoot. And the revolver or shotgun that he purchased with a day's wage he would trade and trade and better the trade, displaying an almost uncanny knack in barter.

Beyond that, Ray Bingham, child that he was, went colorless in the community, excepting that Charlie Thomas, Protector of Game, liked the boy

because, despite his general laziness, he had turned out promptly and regularly, day or night, to fight the recent forest fires.

And then it befell that the stranger interested in timber strolled away through the village to the eastward, toward the mouth of the up-mountain trail — to the last house but one — the house next beyond Charlie Thomas's.

Scarcely better than a shack the place proved to be, whether in shape or in atmosphere. And the door that opened to Mauk's hand revealed an interior in harmony: a squalid chamber, kitchen and living-room in one; a squalid old man, a slatternly, dour-faced, middle-aged woman, and a touzle-headed, unkempt lad, all three sitting at the table eating their noonday meal; then, stretched by the stove, the only cheerful object in sight — a half-bred collie.

The two older people stared dully at the stranger in their doorway — stared while their loaded knives paused midway to their mouths. But the stranger's eyes passed them by, resting only on the boy, who seemed, somehow, to settle down and shrink away from his own embracing shell under that steady gaze.

"Come, Ray," Mauk spoke at last, very quietly.

As if under a spell the boy arose, moving, obedient, toward the door. Now that he stood, it appeared that he was very tall for his fifteen years — five feet eight or so — and disproportionately heavy. And that he stooped. And that his clothes were poor and ragged. Yet, you could have fancied that on this face lurked

a trace of some quality higher than any sign written in the faces of his elders — some quality that conceivably might serve to lift him, in later years, beyond such a sodden slough as theirs.

Nevertheless, as Mauk questioned him when the two sat alone, safe from interruption, he displayed a sort of enduring lumpishness, unmoved by whatever approach, in his refusal to admit any knowledge of the origin of the fires.

"I don't know. — Don't know anything about it at all," he repeated. And so on, for over an hour of steady grilling.

Then, with a crash, all at once down he went in a storm of weeping.

"Yes, I do know. *I* started the fires. Why? I don't know. Guess I was kind of tired of things. No — they told me to go to school all right — grandpop did — I don't know where my father is. Ma — she went off long ago. But nobody could make me go to school after I was twelve. I just naturally hate school. But I found some story-books — got them at the drug-store, and they was stories about a feller that done all kinds of things — an' — I guess — I thought — I could do like the books said.

"No, I *did n't* want Charlie Thomas's money. Not really. An' I did n't reckon to shoot him, neither, nor any one else, though I always carry a gun. I like guns. But I wanted to see if I could scare Charlie, too, like the feller in that book done.

"So I set the fires — and then I went up early the same mornin's, and put notes out — put 'em along the trail that goes from Wolf Rock to Cave Road

— and over at the Devil's Jumping Off Place, an' around.

"And then I watched the fires burn — but I did n't like to see 'em once they got big, all the same. An' I was afraid they'd find out who set 'em.

"So then I'd come back quick — before anybody'd more 'n found out there *was* a fire, and I'd hurry over to Charlie Thomas's and go out with him and fight the fire — fight all night, sometimes. Say, that *was* real exciting, that was!" — with a sudden gleam of exaltation. "An' if *you* had n't turned up to spoil it all, Charlie Thomas would have come across with the money pretty soon, too!

"*Yes*, he *would*, I tell you! I'd got him mighty nigh scared to death already. An' I'd have landed him, darned if I would n't, if it cost all the timber in the county!"

The rest of the tale is pure technicality. It shows a big-brotherly, kindly, quiet soldier leading a frightened boy through the due and necessary formalities of the law — first to the Justice of the Peace of Good Luck, to make his sworn confession; next to the county seat, to the attorney for the State Department of Forestry, in order that that official might familiarize himself with the State's case; then to an Alderman's Court, for hearing on charge of blackmail and of violating the forestry laws; and finally, commitment to jail to await trial.

Thus by three days' work of one trained man was a tide of destruction stayed — an enormous, irreparable loss prevented. Of which work that man's two-page report in "A" Troop files concludes:

Having completed my tour of duty, I returned to Station, via Penna. R.R., using transportation request No. 19728.

Time of leaving station, 2 P.M.....	4/2/20
Time of return, 7 P.M.....	4/5/20
Miles travelled, dismounted.....	20
Miles travelled, rail.....	100
Other vehicle.....	5
	125

And, forty cents trolley fare.

"What a particularly bad boy!" said a bystander in the case to Sergeant Mauk.

Sergeant Mauk, with his slow smile, made characteristic answer:

"Bad boy? Now, *I* wonder if there really was ever such an animal."

Recorder's Note: In this story the true names of State Police officers are given. Names of civilians concerned have, for obvious reasons, been changed. All place-names are as the map shows them, with the exception of "Good Luck," which is a substitute.

VII

ADVERTISING MUSTARD

In the very root of its birth the name of the thing was Chaos. In madness it first saw day. And so, flouncing on through the utterly absurd, it finally flopped, like a dislodged wasp's nest, with all heat and tumult, square on the head of the High Sheriff of Luzerne County. And to pretend that the High Sheriff liked it there were to darken counsel.

But did he flinch? Not he!

Afar back in the year 1901, some hundreds of assorted Poles, Slavs, Austrians of sorts, principally miners by calling, resident in the village of Dupont, near Wilkes-Barre, organized for public worship according to the usage of their faith. They bought land, they built a church and a presbytery, and they took title thereto in the name of the Right Reverend Michael J. Hoban, Bishop of the diocese.

This was regular procedure, the Bishop acting as trustee for the congregation.

And the Bishop, after an interval, assigned to that congregation, to be its priest, the Reverend Henry Cichoki, who duly served in such capacity for ten years and over.

Now, toward the end of the ten years, the health of Father Cichoki began to fail. So that the congregation conceived it desirable that he either be given an assistant, or be relieved entirely from his labors. They accordingly petitioned the Bishop, not failing

to emphasize at the same time a desire that the newcomer be of American birth, but of Polish nationality.

This desire the good Bishop would gladly have met; but to do so at the moment proved practically impossible.

Finally, however, in mid-September, 1915, such a priest was found, in the person of the Reverend Narcissus Sosnowski. And on the 17th of September, in all promptitude, Father Sosnowski received his appointment to be rector of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, at Dupont, with orders to report there on September 21st to take full charge of the parish.

Meantime, an untoward thing had happened. Without any sort of authority, save its own hot-headed impulse, the congregation had elected a guide for itself, and had not elected wisely.

Now, from here forward, in order to understand this checkered history, three essential facts must be borne in mind: First, that the title to the church property, its land and buildings, is absolutely vested in the Bishop, as trustee for the congregation. Second, that, under Church laws, and by the adjudications of the courts of the State of Pennsylvania, it is the prerogative of the Bishop of any diocese to select and assign to each parish in his diocese, a priest — the Bishop himself being the judge of the priest's fitness. Third, that the rights and duties of the Church Committee concern only the temporal affairs of the congregation, such as the raising of money and the care of Church property, in no wise including a

right to disturb in any manner the duly appointed priest.

And in what is to follow here nothing will be found to indicate that any of the three provisions lack wisdom or foresight.

Father Sosnowski, quiet and peace-loving, now proceeded about his regular duties as any good priest would do. The old rector had taken leave. Nothing stood between the actual rector and his people save the strange ambition of the people's Unwise Choice.

Not all the people joined in this choosing. In fact, a fair number of them revolted at it. But other heads flamed. So, no later than the 16th of November, not yet a month after his induction, the rightful priest of the parish experienced the sensation of reading the following words, written on a piece of paper and left at his own front door:

Very Rev. Sir Sosnowski in Dupont, Pa., by the church of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in Dupont, Pa.

The undersigned parochial committee, in its own name, and the entire parishioners, we notify Very Rev. Sir Sosnowski to vacate our residence within forty-eight (48) hours, "that is to get out," also the keys from the residence and the church are to be given to the hands of the parochial committee.

In case of controversy if this should not happen, then we would have to use our "Rights and Nature" to eject Very Rev. Sir Sosnowski because Rev. N. Sosnowski was not accepted by the parochial committee and parishioners.

This document was signed with the names of Adam Skiba, Secretary of the Church Committee, and six

others. And although Adam Skiba later admitted that he wrote all seven names himself, that hardly mattered, as will presently appear.

One day passed without incident. The second morning, November 18th, arrived, and with it the end of the forty-eight hours. Father Sosnowski, young and strong and big of limb, but dearly loving peace, finished his mass at half-after-eight, left the church, and started across the yard toward the rectory.

As he neared his own rear door, a friendly lad of the parish came running up in high excitement.

"They're coming, Father!" he panted. "There's going to be a row. Don't let 'em inside the house. If you do, you'll never get 'em out again!"

So the priest went straight to his gate to face the prospect.

The prospect consisted of the seven signers of the eviction warrant, bearing hammers, saws, nails and deal boards, tramping up the road, most determined of aspect.

"What is your business here?" the priest inquired as they drew up before him.

"We want to go into this house," one replied.

"On what business?" repeated their lawful pastor.

"Did you get our letter?" demanded Kukucka, spokesman and President of the Church Committee.

"I did."

"Then you know what you have to do — Get out."

"If you have a complaint to make, you should take it to the Bishop."

"O-ah — we've had enough of the Bishop."

"We've come here to board up this place. You get out!"

"If you don't get out, we've got dynamite. We'll blow the house up!"

"Men, you are *looking* for trouble," sighed the priest, as he closed and locked his door in their faces. Then he went back to his kitchen and sat down to a much-needed meal.

Kukucka, President of the Committee, walked into the middle of the road and beckoned with a long arm.

Just down the street, at a commanding window in the house of Barney Toborowski, Church Committeeman and signer of the letter of eviction, sat the Unwise, comfortable, interested, looking out with all his eyes. Close around that house swarmed and buzzed some two hundred Poles, men and women, gathered during the last hour. And with that swarm the watcher at the window remained in touch. Just as they had agreed, in their common council, the thing was going forward, working to a charm. Now at Kukucka's signal, the waiting crowd surged ahead, moving up in a mass, banking itself about the rectory.

The hour was nearing nine o'clock.

And so, for a time, the situation hung while the assemblage swelled apace.

Father Sosnowski, having finished his meal, came out upon his porch once more and spoke to the people. But they would hear nothing that he urged.

"Get out!" they shouted. "You have to get out!"

So he withdrew from them, again locking his door.

Meantime it was noticed that every five minutes or so, a little group would detach itself from the crowd, making off down the street. And that when that group returned, somewhat later, it was flushed of face and dark of mien. Coming and going, going and coming, such little clusters kept always on the move, until every man in the crowd, perhaps, had made several brief excursions.

It takes a good deal of raw material to tell on the hard heads of men of that stripe and habit. But, by an hour after noon, steady industry had done its work. The thing was accomplished.

"I don't want worse to happen," thought the peace-loving priest, when their drunken shouts reached him.

So he opened his door, let in the triumphant committee, and surrendered the keys of the rectory.

"You can get the church keys to-morrow from the Bishop," said he. And for some unexplained reason they let him depart forthwith in the possession of that last sign of authority.

Then the mob, wildly boisterous but now rejoicing, romped back to the house down the street, called the Unwise out upon the balcony, and did obeisance before him. That night, they celebrated their glorious common victory. And the form of that celebration, as later described under oath, is best not touched upon at all!

Now you can picture for yourself the sentiments of the Bishop when, a day or two later, the sane remnant of the congregation brought him news of the thing, with a prayer for help and advice. You can

picture his sentiments. But what in the world could he do?

He gave them the advice for which they prayed.

"Go to Mr. Frank Slattery, District Attorney, in Wilkes-Barre, and get him to ask for an injunction restraining these people from installing an interloper in your church and residence."

They went. Mr. Slattery acted. So did the Court. And, after a hearing in which the Bishop himself appeared, the Court continued the preliminary injunction. Further, the Chancellor in Equity, in open session, ordered all members of the congregation to recognize the authority of the Bishop, solemnly warning them in no wise to interfere with the Bishop's appointee in his free use of the church at Dupont.

So, backed and advised by his Bishop and by counsel, Father Sosnowski, on Sunday, December 19th, returned to Dupont and proceeded to the church with the purpose of there saying mass.

But before the church door stood a militant guard.

"The Bishop has nothing to do with us!" roared one; while another, a most formidable Amazon brandishing a fist full of mischief, shouted to her lawful spiritual director:

"If you try to break in here, the farewell you got a few weeks ago *is n't in it* with what we'll give you now!"

Once more Father Sosnowski withdrew. Once more — on Christmas Day — he returned to the attempt, this time accompanied by the Sheriff of Luzerne County.

But again a defiant crowd guarded the entrance to the sacred building, mirthfully mocked the Sheriff, laughed at Court injunctions, and drowned the appealing voice of their priest with uproar and vile language.

"We'd better go back," said the Sheriff, leading the way.

Sosnowski, lover of peace, followed him. Physical violence he would not use. Nothing else remained. He gave up.

Then the Bishop, harassed and outraged, appointed as administrator pro tem. an erstwhile Polish soldier, the Reverend Francis Kurkowski. And the Court, on its side, ordered all the town of Dupont placarded with warnings printed in Polish and in English, concerning the imminent penalties of contempt of Court.

But the rebels, now firmly convinced that the whole world, like a ripe plum, wooed their embrace, handled Father Kurkowski with levity.

His initial appearance was scheduled for New Year's Day. On New Year's morning Father Kurkowski arrived in Dupont, was met at the station by the handful of the faithful, and proceeded with them to the church.

The place was already infested. Several hundred strong, women and men surged about the door. "To hell with the Bishop! To hell with the Court!" they flung to the pleading priest. "You shall never get into this church of ours!"

And when, pursued by a rain of snowballs, the unfortunate man fled to a telephone thinking to call

the Sheriff to his aid, that once-burnt child cannily responded, in substance, only thus:

"Better keep away from them! They're on their own property, and they're crazy."

Among the crowd from time to time appeared the Unwise, issuing now from the church, now from the rectory; and Father Kurkowski did not fail to note that, whenever he so appeared, a worse outbreak of violence descended upon his own person.

In the end the mob triumphed once again. It cursed the Bishop and his representative. "Pigs!" "Irish servant!" "Polish traitor!" it screamed, and described to the Pole in unclean terms his impending fate.

Finally, led by a brawny fighting woman, it drove him from the town, tattered of garments, battered, bleeding, bruised by sticks and by fists.

"Better keep away from them," thought the Sheriff. "Better keep away from them. They're crazy."

Which counsel, for lack of stronger, might have prevailed, leading ignorance toward wickedness, breeding Bolsheviks in the land, but for the turn of the Ever-turning Wheel.

The Wheel spun, bringing with it on its rising rim a new High Sheriff to Luzerne County. And that is the man behind the forty-ninth word of this story.

Now, Sheriff George Buss is German-born. You can't get away from that, nor from the fact that he did his turn, long years ago, in the Kaiser's army. But neither can you deny, nor will any good citizen in all Eastern Pennsylvania let you attempt such

nonsense, that Sheriff George Buss is as ardent and loyal an American, as honest and plucky a man, and as high-spirited and faithful a Sheriff as ever trod shoe-leather.

Sheriff Buss, since he came into office, has met a hundred opportunities to show the white feather where such a display would be called by other men in his place "just common discretion." And, instead of that dismal old plume, he has mounted the red badge of war with a regularity and a vigor that would do your heart good to know.

Sheriff Buss never stops to think of politics, policy, or personal consequences. He just jumps in with all fours, single-purposed, and does his duty like a man. He will go to Jericho to perform a generous act, without a thought of recompense. He will go there again to stop a wrong or to get a villain, without a thought of danger. May his energy never desert him, and his shadow never grow less!

But this excellent Sheriff of Luzerne County, on that early day of January, 1916, set for his induction into office, was so ill that they had to give him the oath in his bed. Appendicitis, and an operation. And when, about the tenth day of the month, Father Kurkowski and one of the righteous remnant came hopefully to him for help in their trouble, he was yet rather shaky on his legs.

"The Bishop advised us to appeal to you," urged the priest. "Those people all but killed me last week."

And three days later arrived the confirmatory letter of the Bishop himself, praying for protection for

his rector, that mass might be duly said in the church of Dupont, on the morning of Sunday, January 16th, at nine of the clock.

To the Bishop's plea were added three separate props — the request of the District Attorney, the request of the Honorable Henry A. Fuller, President Judge of the County Court, and, last but not least, the Sheriff's own sense of outraged decency in the whole ridiculous episode.

"I will go," said the Sheriff to the Bishop, to the District Attorney, to the Judge President, to himself. And as yet not one of the four really knew just what those three little words signified.

Rather white and slow, for him — rather gently moving — the Sheriff left his office, descended the Court-House steps and climbed into his car. Another moment and he had crossed the beautiful Susquehanna, heading away for Wyoming and the Barracks of "B" Troop, Pennsylvania State Police.

"Because," said the sensible creature, "*this* time it's *business*. The Law of the land shall furnish no more amusement for my County of Luzerne."

Half an hour later, he sat in the Captain's office, eagerly telling his tale. Across the hall, as he entered, he had seen in the orderly room certain faces, certain figures — figures of soldiers, faces of men. And the sight had cheered his soul.

"So, Captain, I don't really expect any trouble," he finished. "All these people know me and we have always been friendly together. But will you let me have four or five Troopers — that's enough, with

men like yours! — let me take 'em up in my car on Sunday to see me through the job?"

"Surely," the Captain assented, "and — I think I'll go along with you and have a look in, myself."

But all during Thursday and Friday rumors reached the Court-House of great and greater folly rampant in Dupont, and by Saturday night reports ran so far that the Sheriff changed his mind.

"Better have *more* than enough State Police," thought he; and accordingly telephoned the Commanding officer asking for an additional detail, mounted, to be at the church at nine o'clock of the morrow's morn.

Shortly after eight on Sunday morning, January 16th, the Sheriff in his closed car, accompanied by Captain Pitcher, with Sergeant Leithiser and Privates Link, Slifer, and Kolis of the State Police, entered Dupont from Avoca, at its farther end. The Sheriff wished to survey the town.

It is not a bad little place, to look at. Though the streets are mostly unpaved, though scant thought has been given to beauty, and though many of the houses are ramshackle blots, many more are not. And the two salient features through it all are, first, that the inhabitants in general are practically equal in means and opportunity; and, second, that apparent differences in fortune are differences rather in matters of taste. The saloons, the "hotels," and the I.W.W. are there, to account for that.

As the Sheriff's car trundled slowly through the length of the town, not a sign of excitement appeared, nor of anything out of the ordinary. At the

church, perhaps twenty-five persons were gathered, quietly standing by the gate.

And so, with relief in his mind, the Sheriff drove on to the Laurel Line Station, where he had agreed to pick up the Reverend Father Kurkowski and his battered cause.

The Father was there — was added to the company in the Sheriff's motor, which, full-loaded turned again toward the church.

But what had happened in this brief interval? Not twenty-five, but ten times that number, were the figures now crowding the road before the gate. And seemingly every man and woman of the lot carried a club or a stone.

"Captain, if you and your men, and the Father, here, will wait in the car," said the Sheriff, "I'd like to go over alone and speak to these people first."

So over he went, in his easy way, shook hands with all within reach, and unfolded his errand.

"I am your neighbor and your friend," he told them. "You have seen me and known me ever since you came to this country. I am your friend always. And now I am also High Sheriff of the County. You have been doing wrong. You have disobeyed your Bishop, and that is your own affair in a way. But in disobeying your Bishop, you have also disobeyed the law of the State. Several times, in Court, you have been warned of this, by the Judge. The Judge also warned you, to your faces, that if you persisted you would be in contempt of Court, and would be punished. You persisted, nevertheless. So the Judge sent Court officers to serve summonses on you to

appear before him. Then, like wild men, you snatched the summonses, tore them up, and spat and stamped upon them, and drove the officers away with threats and evil language.

"Now, therefore, I, as High Sheriff of the County, have a duty to end all this. The end has come to-day. I am here to take possession of this church, to see that you render due respect to the Law of the Land, and that your rightful priest, Father Kurkowski, is permitted to hold service here this morning.

"So, I ask you, as friends, and in the name of the Law, to put down the weapons in your hands, to give peaceable entrance to this church, and to behave yourselves as orderly men and women. Otherwise, to-morrow morning you will be dealt with by the Court."

But the crowd, through much practical experiment uniform of result, had learned to hold both Law and Court in complete contempt. Why not?

"We don't care a damn for your Court!" shrieked a woman in the foreground.

"No — nor for Judges!"

"Nor for Sheriffs!"

"Nor for Bishops!"

"Nor for this whole damned country! To hell with it!"

The clamor ran through the crowd.

"We paid for this church ourselves. *Our* church. No one goes in but us. You get to hell out of here!"

The Sheriff walked back to his car.

"They are worse than I thought," he said to the Captain, "but I want to try them once more before

exciting them with the show of force. Please wait, while I make one further attempt."

So again he exhorted them, this time with both hands in the air, as a sign of peace.

"Let me take possession undisturbed by you," he urged. "I shall not ask you again. If you don't obey this time, I shall enforce the law, with the assistance of the State Police."

But the uproar that greeted his speech was worse than before. Worse, because the crowd, within the last five minutes, had doubled in number, and because every individual in it was howling at the top of his lungs.

Now, while all this went forward, Captain Pitcher had had ample time to survey the scene. The church land is fairly level ground, perhaps two hundred feet in frontage, perhaps two hundred feet in depth. And it occupies the corner of two streets. The church itself, in view of the character of the congregation, is rather an ambitious affair — a sizeable frame building, with a tower and a belfry, and with a high front stoop under which, on the right side, a door leads into a spacious basement. As you face it, the building stands near the corner of the lot, with a liberal margin of ground between it and the fence on either street. The fence in front is a substantial iron structure about four feet high. The fence on the side street is a stanch wooden picket affair, somewhat taller. The presbytery stands on the front street, at a distance of one hundred feet, more or less, from the church. And between the two buildings, as well as behind the church, lies open ground, free of any obstruction.

Church, presbytery, fences and grounds, showed care in upkeep. Everything normal about them looked neat and prosperous.

Even the abnormal, in some respects, lacked nothing in neatness. For example, the two full cartloads of stones piled on the platform of the high church stoop had been stacked in methodical order. Other such piles, representing many such cartloads, tidily punctuated the open spaces. One wondered why. And a certain mathematical precision marked the equipment of the crowd. For, as far as the eye could tell, not a person in all that multitude was unarmed.

Some carried mine-stakes, some crow-bars, some pick-axes, some oaken clubs studded with spikes. Some grasped long "two-by-fours," through whose ends were driven new steel nails so that the sharp shafts stood out, firm and far, like the prongs of a long-toothed rake.

As for the women, many were armed like the men, many carried queer-looking bundles of something yet to be named, and many more kept their hands hidden under their shawls.

"There," said the Captain to himself, "there, under those shawls, are the guns."

The crowd had now withdrawn from the street, massing itself within the church precincts. The stoop and the high steps leading to it were loaded with humanity. The yard was a sea of yelling heads. Into the basement, by the door under the stoop, a steady flood of men had, from the first, been pouring. Between the church façade and the churchyard gate,

the people jammed as thick as they could stand — women in front.

"I give it up. We'll have to force an entrance," the Sheriff confessed, returning from his second vain essay.

"Right," the Captain replied. And as he spoke he heard with satisfaction the sharp clang of hoofs on frozen ground.

True to the minute, the mounted squad rounded the corner. First Sergeant Herbert Smith, Corporal Metcalf (riding Babe) Corporal Stevenson, Privates Ralph A. Tipton, Ammon, Plummer, Marshall, and Gallagher. And no commander on this war-harried earth has led better men than those eight.

The Sheriff's desire now was, to go forward with the dismounted men, open the gate, and give entrance to the mounted squad. This latter, then, should clear the yard while the Sheriff himself, with the keys that he displayed, should unlock the church door and make way for Father Kurkowski in his priestly duty.

Captain Pitcher gave orders accordingly. Then he did one of those things that the men a man leads remember forever.

"I want to say this," said Sergeant Leithiser, telling the story later, "it was for *us*, not for our Captain, to open that gate. And I've seen lots of officers, in different police departments, stand back and supervise such jobs. 'Go in and clean it out,' they'd say. But this Captain of ours put it otherwise. '*Come* on boys, *we'll* clean it out,' says he. And it's things like that makes "B" Troop solid behind him."

"Come on, boys, we'll clean it out," said he, and with the Sheriff at his side and the four Troopers close at his back, he made for the gate of the church of Dupont.

That gate was double-leaved, latching to an iron post in the centre. And as the Captain's intention became evident, a brawny Lithuanian in the front rank of the fiercely pressing crowd flung both her arms around the central post and the two uprights latched to it.

Her arms made a padlock of flesh and bone. The Captain raised that padlock, reaching for the latch. And with the movement, as if it had been a signal awaited, Reason retired for the day.

The Lithuanian, snatching from her skirts a quart bottle filled with mustard and sand, swung it at arm's length and smashed it fair across the Captain's eyes, cutting a great gash. In the same second the air literally filled with red pepper and powdered mustard. For every woman in that crowd, whatever else she carried in the way of weapons, carried also a battery of these two peacemakers, either in bottles or in paper bags. And she flung them loose, or she flung them with their containers, according to length of range and the judgment of the moment.

With all the storm of blinding dust came a storm of stones, and from the rioters back of the woman as many blows of their long-shafted clubs as had any hope of landing. The Sheriff caught a swinging whack over the shoulders. Again was the Captain viciously struck and yet again, full in the face, till hanging rags of flesh and streaming blood closed his eyes.

And yet he stuck at the gate, with one hand working to open the latch, while with the other he swung his black-jack against the mob. Then, as a club crashed down on his skull, he sank to his knees and dropped motionless.

A moment he lay exposed, while the women beat at him with their splintering glass and filled his wounds with fire. Then Sergeant Smith, pulling off his own coat, held it as a shield above his fallen officer's head, while, with his right arm, he warded off blows meant to finish a killing. With that brief respite the soldier's life came rushing back. On his feet again, damming the blood from his eyes, the Captain sized up the game.

Each Trooper at his side was, like the Sheriff, working at great disadvantage. Ranks of furious fighting women triple-lined the solid fence. From over that protecting screen, the men flung their rocks and swung their long-shafted weapons at will, and the Troopers, using only their nine-inch black-jacks, were practically helpless against them.

Of the mounted squad behind, Corporal Stevenson had already been knocked from his saddle, and although he was now up and ready again, the whole left side of his face appeared to be driven in. Private Tipton, streaming blood from a similar injury, sat like a statue of Discipline, rigid, while his black eyes blazed through his gory mask. Every man bore marks of blows and all the horses plunged and bled under the storm of stones. To open the church gate, in view of the temper of the crowd, was an impossibility. That deep, dense mass of close-packed human bodies

stopped and blocked it tight. The thing could not be done short of the use of firearms.

But the Pennsylvania State Police never use firearms except as a last resort.

"Fall back, men," the Captain ordered. "Sergeant Leithiser, telephone Barracks for the reserve."

And then to the Sergeant: "Await the reserve here in the street. When it comes, we'll pull down that wooden fence on the left of the churchyard and clear the way for the mounted men to enter. Meantime, don't let any more get into the yard. I'll go into Lukasik's house, next door to the priest's and wash up a bit."

Lukasik was Chief of the Town Police, and loyal to the Bishop.

As the Sergeant watched his Captain move away, he would dearly have liked to follow him. For here was a moment, as would seem, when a good man's friend might have counted. The Captain's walk certainly wavered, under the cover of his long, steady stride. His mouth was slashed, his chin smashed in, one of his eyes seemed gone entirely, and from his yellow hair to the tops of his puttees every inch of him was soaked and caked with blood and mustard.

But the Captain had expressly refused help; and Sergeant Herbert Smith now had charge of the detail. Straight in the face, duty confronted him. Inside that churchyard, for example, things were moving fast. Men, women, and children busily carried stones from the big piles, building smaller stacks at more frequent intervals. Others, with

sledge hammers, cracked over-big lumps into handier shapes with sharper edges. Others, again, dug at the backing of the fence, exhuming fresh stores of cobbles. And all worked with the fury of last resolve. Obviously, intending war to the finish, they strengthened preparations while yet they might.

Also, the church bell had begun to toll — not with the sleepy swing of any Sunday morning, but with the wild, hard, heady clangor of alarm.

"What does that mean?" thought the Sergeant.

And then, in a moment, he knew. For a sound of distant shouts echoed the bell, while the mob in the back of the yard, like that on the vantage-ground of the stoop, shouted in answer: "Come on! Come on!"

They came — those rushing reënforcements — ever gaining in volume, while their yell of battle surged on ahead to hearten their yelling friends.

And the eight mounted men of the State Police, with their four dismounted comrades, faced the scene, watching its play. Every one of the twelve had been more or less hurt. Every horse stood bleeding. But when the Sheriff in the goodness of his heart begged Trooper Ralph A. Tipton to take to shelter and give his mount to another man, Tipton spoke for the lot.

"Tipton, your jaw is broken to bits. Your face is cut something awful. You're losing a heap of blood. Better quit while you can," urged Sheriff Buss. "You've had enough."

"No, sir," said Tipton, late Sixth United States Cavalry, as clearly as a man can with half his teeth loose and his mouth full of gore and splintered bone.

"No, *sir*. I'm going *into* that yard over there if it's the last thing I do on earth."

And still the bell tolled, wild and fast, calling, calling.

Deliberately, a young Polish woman — a handsome, big-framed Valkyr with a length of lead pipe for credential in hand — leaned over the fence and called to Trooper Plummer, in the road.

"Listen," she said, taking care to be clearly heard. "You may as well all go back. Sheriff and priest and all of you. *If you enter this yard, not one shall go out alive.* I talk for the rest. We promise you that."

"Yah-h-h!" howled the crowd, confirming the words with a separate volley of stones.

"*Come! — Come! Come! — Come!*" screamed the bell unceasing.

And always the pack grew thicker, thicker, as crowds obeyed the call.

It was now about a quarter of an hour since Captain Pitcher, half-stunned and bleeding, drawing back from the churchyard gate, had ordered Sergeant Leithiser to telephone Barracks for the reserve. And First Sergeant William A. Clark, in charge of Barracks, had no need to be told that such a call, from such a source, means haste.

Now you should know that up to that time, January of the year 1916, the great State of Pennsylvania had entirely failed to perceive a necessity for equipping her world-famous Force with any engines of service swifter than a horse.

A car, you see, costs money down. Even a Ford

costs as much as a funeral. And maybe the man won't die.

Anyway, a Legislature must show a spirit of economy somewhere — and where could it be shown more conspicuously than in hobbling the life, property, and peace-saving power of the State?

So First Sergeant Clark, the need hard upon him, rushed out into an unaffording world and with judgment and firmness commandeered transportation for twenty-one men. Dupont, from "B" Troop Barracks, is four and a half miles. Within twenty minutes of the receipt of the call, First Sergeant Clark delivered his twenty men at Dupont Church gate.

Sheriff Buss, seeing those twenty-one, as, baton at belt, they struck ground, knew that his hour of shame was over. Ralph Tipton knew it, and joyously felt his broken jaw. Corporal Stevenson knew it, and was glad, inside his broken head. Every man of the waiting twelve, afoot or a-horseback, knew it with supreme content.

But the Sheriff would still make his effort for peace.

"Let me go to them alone, boys, once more," he said. "Maybe they'll see their folly and listen, now. But while I go forward to the gate, do some of you go 'round by the picket fence at the side, like the Captain said. And if they won't hear me, do you men on foot pull down that fence. And then, mounted men, *ride in and do your duty. That yard must be cleared,* cost what it costs — unless the mob is to own Luzerne County."

So up went the good Sheriff once again to parley with the Philistines. But not more than before — less, rather — would the Philistines hear him. No sooner had he taken his first step than the rocks began to fly. No sooner did he speak than his voice was lost in a roar of furious jeering:

"To hell with you and your people! To hell with your Judges."

And always the bell tolled, horribly.

Meantime, on the side-street, facing the picket fence, a line of sinewy, soldierly young figures — so few! — had drawn up like a football rush-line. Their Captain was not with them, this time. But they had his order clear. They knew what he wanted. Behind them ranged the mounted men.

At a signal that rush-line broke for the fence. And in the same instant such a storm of sharp-edged stones came hurtling down upon it as fairly blackened the day. "I soberly believe," said one, "that a full ton of rock must have been in the air at any given instant, while we yanked those pickets away."

Now it happens that from the church edifice to the side-street the ground slopes, so that the crowd within the enclosure had decidedly the advantage of terrain. The spreading branches of a young tree planted at the foot of the slope served briefly as some slight protection to these below. But, in a moment's time, the trunk of that tree, straight in the path of the flying rocks, was, on three of its sides, as bare of bark as is a dining-room table, while its lesser branches had flown away in chips.

Faithful to its usual strategy, and counting on the

simple scruples of the State Police, the mob had again put its women and children to the fore, while the men, standing higher and behind that human shield, swung their long iron bars, their lengths of pipe, or their knife-edged shovels on the heads of the State's officers.

But the work of the State's officers, at that juncture, was to tear down that fence.

They tore.

Each man, as he wrenched a picket free, lashed it flail-fashion up through the high-banked fighters, then let it spin away behind. And each, as again he bent to his task, caught on his head and body a furious storm of blows. Those who, like Private Slifer, for example, had no room to get at the pickets, sought means to protect the others on their job. Private Slifer's method was to rush in under a descending lead pipe or bar or shovel, to grab its hither end just before it crashed on a brother officer's head, to whirl it around in a big arc, and so lay low a swathe of back-row rioters. Then, with the beautiful truth of a well-made clock, he repeated the gesture.

"Looks like Slifer wants to do the whole thing himself," growled one mounted man to another, as he unsuccessfully dodged a brick.

Cr-r-a-ack! Two whole panels down, pulled bodily away, fair and free as an open barn door. Room enough. Now for the horses!

But the horses, poor innocents, hesitated. Flying rocks were hammering them like rain.

"Spurs!" snapped the First Sergeant.

And in they went.

Now from that time on, to tell the tale as a whole is impossible. There was no consecutive whole — only a wild blaze of separate, interlocking, utterly complete and simultaneous parts. And, while the entire thing was over in fifteen minutes, the composition involved a hundred scenes, and situations distinct as so many canvases.

The State Police fought like the State Police, in numbers as one to thirty. The rioters, male and female, fought like the Mad Mullah's fanatics — like homicidal madmen — like a pack of hydrophobic wolves, while their leaders howled them on.

At the first onset, the officers on foot worked with their left arms shielding their heads. For, as one said, "it was a strange sight to see the air as a flying sheet of stones moving against you!"

But in a moment more the action had grown too thick for any such caution. Stones, slung-shots, brass knuckles, hammers, adzes, picks, anything that would kill, the mob hugged in with. And now and again a shot cracked out from somewhere over beyond.

"Keep the line straight, men," First Sergeant Clark had repeated, as his squad broke forward.

And yet, once and again, a scrap of a salient *would* develop.

As with Private Slifer, that ever-patient, inoffensive soul, now joyfully emerged from the confines of the second line.

With a smile of utter content on his honest face, Private Slifer got down to where getting would do the most good, and buried himself in the crowd. For

what seemed like three seconds he stayed there submerged. Then a free space, ten feet square, suddenly showed in that area, with George Slifer, crouched for his next plunge, planted full in its midst. And so, on and on with him, while the line bent ever a bit in his wake.

In a mêlée so densely packed, and with a mob at once so frenzied and so heavily outnumbering its assailants, it was inevitable that many of that mob's hot blows should fall upon its own heads. Those broad-chested, big-armed peasant women, thronging the high church steps, standing braced with legs astride while with all their might they flung stones so big as to tax the spread of their two big hands, aimed their missiles at the officers of the State.

But, in the writhing, struggling mass below, targets changed place in the twinkling of an eye, and not seldom the well-aimed stone landed on the body of another fighting woman. Then her wild howl of pain burst through her great-lunged battle-cry. She staggered and fell — yet, in the fraction of a second, was up again and at it with redoubled rage.

Throughout the affair the ferocity and the striking strength of the women fully equalled that of their men.

As the Troopers at the side pressed into the crowd, separating it and driving it before them, others attacked the flanks. And beyond all manner of question, that mob felt the full individual superiority of each State officer. Yet, thirty good fighting men to one is tremendous odds.

Corporal Albert Carlson, late Sergeant Fourteenth United States Infantry, has lived a life as full of adventure as a rocket is full of sparks. But never in all his crisp existence had Corporal Carlson a busier moment than one at Dupont that day.

He was shoving up the slope, slowly pushing his segment of mob before him, when a heavy club, swung from the side, caught him just below the breast. Almost in the same instant an unseen rioter, running in behind, crow-bar in hand, landed a terrific blow on Carlson's left shoulder.

Now, Corporal Carlson's shoulders are as broad as any you are likely to meet, but that particular whack was too much for them. Corporal Carlson went down with a crash, on his left side. And the shoulder went out of business — crumpled up.

Instantly the fighters jumped at him — a score of them at once, striking at his head, while a woman close above flung a handful of cayenne into his eyes.

"Kill him! Kill the —— ——," she foamed.

And they did their best to obey her.

But Carlson, struggling to turn on his right side, struggling to defend his head — Carlson, even half-crippled and down, was too much for them. Erect again, he fought them more than off — with his one good arm drove them howling before him, the while his left shoulder dangled loose on his chest.

Because, you see, its attaching back ligaments had ripped away from their moorings. The thing was n't out of joint alone; it was cast-away. But Corporal Carlson's attention was otherwise occupied. He stayed in the fight to the end.

And now is the time to speak of one significant detail — a detail not to be forgotten through all the rest of this narrative: Every man of the State Police carried, that day, a heavy service revolver in his holster. Every man wore a full-filled cartridge belt. *And the Captain had given no order not to shoot.*

Why? Because the Captain of "B" Troop knew his men — knew them sound in the Squadron's maxim: "Use no more force than is necessary." Knew he could trust them — their coolness, forbearance, judgment.

So, as a matter of course, they voluntarily took such risks as no Captain could ask them to incur. The Honor of The Force rested in the hands of each separate man of them. Compared to that, they counted life itself as cheap.

Therefore, as the field stood, the crowd had, on its side, all the advantage of weapons, as well as an enormous numerical advantage expressed in brawny, outdoor, fighting strength.

Nor could it here be urged that the conviction of right lent courage to one side only. The whole mad, ignorant mob believed its cause just.

"I have worked hard to earn money," cried one young girl, confronting a Trooper squarely. "I have helped pay for this church. So I've earned a share in it. You can kill me where I stand, but I'll stay here till you do."

And with that, with no uncertain aim, she swung her club at his head.

The attack from the side had now cleared the sloping ground between the church and the picket

fence. Breaking both ways, the mob was retreating around the building, the Troopers dividing to pursue. Each officer the centre of a separate maelstrom, each had his separate war to wage. And so it was that Trooper Boettner, late quartermaster sergeant, Third United States Cavalry, found himself worrying away alone at a tough knot of humanity that strove to beat in his head.

What happened then, no one can tell. Things moved too fast. But Trooper Boettner remembers the sight of a great club in the air, sweeping down on his skull, remembers his own instinctive raising of his baton to ward off the blow, remembers the spurt of blood as his second finger burst, and then the sudden cleared space as the gang turned and ran.

Boettner, hunting them across the front of the church, rounded the corner. And there he saw a sight that gave his feet wings.

Lying on the ground, stretched at full length, motionless, lay Private Ross Humer, his helmet rolled aside, his head in a pool of blood.

"Let me get to him!" Boettner prayed, as he ran. "Let me once get to him before they finish the job!"

But he had barely reached his comrade — had but just stooped over him to draw him out of the path of the fight— when a friendly voice shouted through the crowd: "Hi! Boettner! *Boettner*, look out!"

The Trooper sprang up just in time to see a brawny giant bearing close down upon him, whirling a "two-by-four" six feet long.

His hand flew to his holster, but in the same instant, "No," he thought, "I'll get in some other way,"

and with that he bestrode Humer's body, covering it with his own.

Now, perhaps two seconds before this dot on the clock, Corporal Metcalf, riding that loveliest of creatures and most faithful of comrades, Babe, had worked his own particular gang to the front of the church and past it, on the run. Accelerating its pace, he himself had passed close under the high front stoop. And, as he did so, one of the still-unabated Amazons at the top had, with a deadly aim, hurled the biggest rock of the day straight down upon his head.

It split his helmet wide open. It nearly flung him from his saddle. Just for an instant it blackened the world before his eyes. And yet, even as Babe leaped forward, he caught his reeling senses fast. And so it befell that his first clear vision was that of Boettner bestriding Humer's body and confronting a giant Hun who whirled a six-foot two-by-four at a range that left scant room for hope.

To save his two mates was Metcalf's one thought—to get between them and the finish of that infernal lunge — to knock the Hun off his feet. Babe knew to a "t" the meaning of the touch he gave. Babe eagerly jumped to the work. But — and save for the daze in his head Metcalf must have realized the fact in advance — the distance was just one jump too long.

Stretching from his stirrups, the rider just failed to reach his mark, and the deadly blow meant for Boettner's *coup de grâce* crashed full upon Babe's own beautiful head.

Swiftly the two-by-four swung again — reached its wicked height in the air — but in that instant a shot rang out. The Hun reeled, dropped his weapon, staggered back.

Whence had the shot come?

Then: "They're shooting from the belfry, boys!" some one shouted. And with that five Troopers — Corporal Freeman and Privates Walters, Shupnik, Boettner, and Gallagher, dashed for the belfry door.

It is a little side door. And it was locked fast — heavily barred within.

"Can't break this open," the men agreed after two good lifts.

"Climb over the transom and open it from inside," said a voice behind.

"Who are you?"

"Buss, Sheriff's authority."

"All right. Go ahead."

In another moment Trooper Walters, mounting on the shoulders of his friends, had dropped through the transom, ripped the bars loose and opened that door.

Making for the belfry tower and barricading its door behind them to prevent an attack from their rear, the men climbed the narrow stairs to the organ loft, there confronting the lowest of the three ladders that led into the tower itself. Up the first they swarmed and reached the little platform at its top, leaving there two men. Up the second, to its landing stage, and left a man.

Then Walters, good soldier that he is, ran up that

last ladder almost to the top, leaving behind a soldier as good as himself.

"Come down out of there!" he shouted to the nest he now sighted above. "Give yourselves up!"

But they did not want to come — those six merry bell-ringing gunmen so cosily aloft. On the ladder they tackled him, one by one; and he, swinging through to the back of the rungs, handled them as they came. So, turn by turn, after short, stiff struggles, they dropped.

"Will you walk down or fall down?" the nether Trooper would fondly ask, as, cursing and kicking, they struck the first platform.

And just on their answer depended the manner of their descent to the next grade.

Outside, in the churchyard, the battle yet roared in full swing. And in the midst of it, here, there, and all over the place, worked the Captain once more — a fearsome sight.

Awaiting no surgeon's aid, he had swathed his own head as best he might, and so, turbaned in a blood-soaked towel and with a dripping scarlet bandage protecting one eye, had plunged again into the fight. From top to toe, his uniform reeked a hideous yellowish paste. But in the eyes of his men, he shone as a vision of light.

"Jove! There's the Captain again!" cried a mounted Trooper to a comrade afoot.

"No! What's he doing?"

"Advertising mustard, by his looks," grunted the other, joyfully, as he landed a whack just right.

The crowd that at first had gathered in the basement, to form a concealed reserve, had early rushed forth to swell the rioters' strength. As the limit of endurance passed, however, individuals would fall back through the swarm, making for asylum within. And every Trooper who perceived such a movement helped it on with a will.

But, "Don't let 'em out again," the Captain ordered; "yonder's an A1 jail!"

Then, of a sudden, from the basement door waved a little white flag.

"Man dying!" the word came forth. "A doctor! A doctor!"

"Pass him out," the Troopers called back.

And it was Captain Pitcher himself, who, with Sergeant Clark, received in his arms the wounded man's limp body, starting with it toward the gate.

"He's badly shot," said the Captain. "We must get him out of this, quick!"

Even as he spoke, the crowd, with a joyful howl, let fly a storm of rocks.

Two State officers, with hands engaged—no matter with what — unable to protect themselves. Glorious chance! And the women crowded on the high stoop steps screamed their Valkyr's battle-hoot as they swung their whole bodies' weight into their missiles' drive.

Trooper Tipton, dashing in to save a comrade's life, caught one of those missiles fair on the left side of his head, in the very same spot where, at the beginning of the fray, another stone had broken his jaw. This second finished the job, leaving not an

inch of whole flesh, nor a single tooth firm in place. But Tipton's objective none the less slapped his length on the ground.

Among the ever-increasing number of such prone figures lay several women; and wherever the mob left it possible, the Troopers drew the women out from the path of the trampling fight. The tide had turned. You could see it now. And although in the centre war waged hot the outskirts were falling away. Some of the mob stealthily crept toward the rectory seeking a quiet escape. Others, hotly pursued, vaulted over the fence and into the road.

In the road, reënforced by allies that had never effected an entry, they stood again, and another "free-for-all" fight ensued before they broke for bulwarks in the houses along the street. But out of those houses once more the pursuers harried them, gathered them in.

Meantime, over in the rectory, a curious scene took place. Corporal Metcalf and Private Plummer, seeing there the status of the case, conceived that they might do useful work afoot. So, dismounting, they jumped for the two house doors. Up the stairs they chased a flying swarm, and at last, to their own grim amusement, dug it out piecemeal from under beds, from behind a blackboard, from within curtains and closets, finally plucking their last refugee from a wardrobe, where, with priest's robes pulled over battle-stained raiment, he cowered in the hope of passing for empty canonicals.

Corporal Metcalf and Private Plummer, while they tidied up the place, had left their two horses to

rest. As a matter of fact, though, those horses' spirit was equal to their masters' own. A man's mount is his reflection; so much, through twelve long years of experience, Pennsylvania State Troopers had learned to know. Yet that Sunday morning at Dupont proved the thing once more, and by a test no less drastic than the stiffest of earlier days.

Before the arrival of the Barracks reserve and while yet the mounted men faced the crowd from beyond the churchyard walls, the horses had suffered cruelly under a battery of stones. But once inside that yard their ordeal increased forty-fold. At first — at the very onset — they had travelled a trifle nervously. Then, with the wonderful horse's sense of his man, and of the work cut for them both, they quickly cooled down. From that on, if you would not call their conduct heroism, you may hunt at your leisure for a better word.

The mob before, beside, and close all about singled out the horses for particular abuse. Men and women hammered them with crow-bars and with slung-shots, beat them with sharp-bossed clubs, dug at their eyes, crashed at them with stones. Men and women deliberately tore at their tender flesh with sharp-toothed gouges, swinging the heavy weapons with frenzied strength till the long, steel prongs struck in, hilt-deep; then letting them hang, or ripping them back to enlarge the wound. From every part of their bodies — even from their hoofs — the horses streamed blood. And yet they obeyed as sensitively, they worked as coolly, as if that wild storm had been a parade.

"My Bill is good company," says Trooper Tipton, thinking of long, lonely days and nights in hills and forest, on patrol. "My Bill is good company — you can trust him all the time." And Bill that day, brutally man-handled, proved, like all his seven companions, that "you can trust him," in very truth.

But it was Babe, Corporal Metcalf's beautiful Babe, who, of all the devoted eight, suffered most cruelly. Even before the terrific blow meant for the killing of Trooper Boettner, and caught instead between Babe's eyes, the horse had been savagely slashed, spiked, and bruised, while a bullet had torn through his breast. Yet with each fresh wound he had only shaken his delicate head, not one whit confused or daunted, not one whit less quick to catch his rider's next desire. Now, when the giant Hun's great "two-by-four" smashed square between his eyes, he never even backed, but took it like the gentleman he is, standing. And although the blood spurted from his eyes and gushed from his nose, he gallantly carried Corporal Metcalf — himself hacked, bruised, and bleeding — through all the rest of that mad fight.[1]

Struggling, plunging, appearing, disappearing, individual figures cannot long be followed through the scene, yet ever and again reëmerges the Sheriff, plucky fighter, tight to his job. Once, in instant peril of his life, he draws his revolver and fires it in

[1] This is the same horse who, with the same rider, effected the hair-breadth rescue described in *The Standard-Bearers*, in the narrative entitled "Babe."

the air over a rioter's head. A score of times some Trooper's quick intervention saves him from mortal blows. And it is not until the tide of battle has fairly ebbed that he withdraws from the crowd — to call surgeons to the aid of the wounded.

The still-competent rioters having been either dispersed or captured, those really disabled showed up to the number of nearly a hundred. Lying or crouching about the yard and street, they lamented their pains with the same full-throated abandon with which so lately they had yelled on the fray. And the noise of their sorrows cumbered the air. Surgeons now worked among them, while Captain Pitcher and the Sheriff turned their attention to the denizens of their improvised jail.

Some hundred and fifty men and women occupied the place — a crest-fallen, suddenly humbled company. And twenty-odd children huddled among them — understudies of the game.

Herding the children into a group by themselves, the Sheriff spoke of the wrong that had been done, cautioned them, and let them go. Then he separated the women from the crowd, upbraided them thoroughly, took their names, made them swear future good conduct, and released them also. Finally came the examination of the men, resulting in the loading of seventy-one battered and bandaged, exceedingly quiet and deprecatory ring-leaders into trucks bound for the County Jail.

Brought before the President Judge, each of these seventy-one gave his nationality as Austrian. Sixty-one, as reported, were actually Austrian subjects,

four were naturalized citizens of the United States, and the remaining six had applied for first papers. Not a few I.W.W. missionaries seasoned the lot.

Judge Fuller held each defendent in two-thousand-dollar bail, for appearance on charges of inciting to riot, felonious wounding, conspiracy, and carrying concealed weapons. Each of the seventy-one obtained bail.

One rioter — the man who fell shot in the midst of his endeavor to kill Trooper Boettner and his fallen comrade — died. Two others went to hospital. The rest needed no such care.

Of the Troopers, Private Ross Humer, whose helpless body Boettner, at the peril of his own life, had rushed in to shield, lay for many days unconscious, with a compound fracture of the skull, and for four months was incapacitated for duty. And Private Ralph Tipton remained in hospital for ten days while the doctor coaxed together the scattered fragments of his jaws. But, aside from those two, not another man of the Dupont detail slept out of Barracks that night.

Captain Pitcher, with his head full of stitches, and his right eye a doubtful chance, sat at his desk by noon, calmly writing his daily official report, thence going on, without the loss of an hour, to the regular work of the Troop. Corporal Carlson, with his shoulder ripped from its moorings, kept quarters for eight days, then resumed duty. Corporal Stevenson, with his smashed cheek-bone, and Private Jensen, with his demolished nose, proceeded to business as usual. Not a man in the detail had escaped without

painful injuries. Nevertheless "B" Troop that day ran just three men short — no more.

Not so the equipment, however. Many a helmet had given its life to save its wearer's head, many a baton had splintered in two, and every last uniform must make a trip to the scrubbers'.

But Bishop Hoban, when he came to Barracks to visit and to thank his battered champions, had no eye but for the manhood he praised. And the people of the County, like the press of the State, took up the refrain with a will.

Said the "Philadelphia Inquirer":

> The State's Troopers did splendid work at Dupont, just as they always do. They made it possible for the orders of the Court to be obeyed. In the old days the mob would have had its way and law would have been defied successfully. Or else at great expense, the militia would have been summoned with probable shooting or bayonetting....
>
> We are hearing a good deal about preparedness. But there is such a thing as preparedness in a State. What is the best way to enforce order when the spirit of the mob is abroad?...
>
> For genuine preparedness — the State Police!

After that illuminating 16th of January, a great peace fell upon the congregation of the Church of the Sacred Heart at Dupont, and Judge Fuller, feeling that it had learned its lesson, let its penalties go.

Dupont to-day is as respectful toward the Law and toward the uniform of the State's Police as any Judge could desire.

But George Buss, High Sheriff of Luzerne County, is wont to say, with a grateful heart: "If one hun-

dred men *not* wearing that uniform had gone with me into that yard that January morning, not one of the whole blessed lot of us would ever have come out alive. You can take it from me, *for I know.*"

Recorder's Note: In this account, all names of places and persons, and all dates, are in exact accordance with the facts.

VIII

UNDER THE YELLOW FLAG

THE yellow flag was flying in Franklin County. Over those beautiful hillsides a deadly wave of smallpox crept as brush-fires creep in the fall. The thing had begun in one remote village, had gained headway before it was noticed, and now, with its out-reaching tentacles, spread fear in the land.

Dr. Dixon, then State Health Commissioner, had sent his Assistant Chief Medical Inspector to stamp out the scourge; and the Assistant Chief, Dr. J. C. Hunt, wise, vigorous, and full of nerve, was exactly the sort of a man for the task. He promptly took all the steps that the emergency indicated. He identified the infected houses, declared them quarantined, explained to the inmates and to the people at large the meaning and necessity of the measure. And then, to ensure strict observance of rules, he swore in a large number of local residents to act as guards, giving them deputy's authority.

The best element in the communities came forward for this service, appreciating its literally vital importance as the less intelligent classes could not do. Then the doctor and his assistants started in to vaccinate the countryside where there was yet time.

Now, the countryside had objected to the guards — objected on principle and from the moment of their installation.

"Who *is* Lem Patterson, that I've known all my life, that *he* should set up and mount guard on me?" it had indignantly demanded. "What's the Health Department doing, butting into my private affairs? What if Eliza has a little sore in the palm of her hands that they don't like the looks of, is that any reason for cooping the rest of the family up in the house?"

And so, while Lem Patterson patiently stood sentinel at the front door, the family, carrying its fractious spirit with it, would climb the back fence and go to talk it over with the neighbors.

Later, when the neighbors came down with violent sickness, the family bitterly scorned to connect it in any way with the back fence and that trifling little sore on Eliza's hand.

But vaccination was another matter. They did not believe in vaccination. More than that, they believed it bad. Whole villages united in common outcry against it. Evasion, passive resistance, could not content them here. They would run away from the doctors, simply; but if the doctors used Lem Patterson and his like to capture and hold them, then they would fight. And fight they surely did, with such arms as they possessed.

Moreover, once the ice was broken, they brought their arms into wider employ. They attacked the guards set upon infected houses — drove them away with shotgun fire.

Then the sick — such of them as could walk — paraded out openly, and went where they pleased. And the discomfited citizen guards threw up their jobs.

"We don't mind the work," said they to the doctor. "We'd be glad to do that. But we do object to being the helpless targets for guns. And the whole thing's a farce, anyway. You can't control the situation. The disease will run its course."

Incidentally, the course on which it was embarked involved a peculiar threat. Raging first in the towns and hamlets, it had spread through scattering settlements, and thence abroad over the hills. Directly in its line of progress rose Mont Alto. And on Mont Alto stands the State's greatest tuberculosis sanatorium, with its hosts of sick. Smallpox introduced into that dense throng would be horrible beyond words, and smallpox was drawing nearer to it every day and hour.

Under such pressure, and after it had exhausted all the means at its own command, the Health Department appealed to the Department of State Police.

On May 20th, three men from "D" Troop arrived on the scene. Eleven days later four men from "B" Troop came to reënforce them, the combined details thenceforth working under command of Private William A. Kane, late Corporal Twenty-First United States Infantry.

The men were generally quartered in Waynesboro, the most central available point in the infected field. At once they laid hold on their task in The Force's fashion, while the late citizen guard stood by and watched them work. Their first step was to look over the situation and master its details. This, because of long training, they could do with speed, so that

Trooper Kane was very shortly in a position intelligently to organize his system and to put it in motion.

At six o'clock in the morning, as the plan worked, the Troopers rode out on patrol. Their route covered thirty-four miles. At ten o'clock at night the day patrol returned to quarters. At ten o'clock at night the night patrol rode out, returning to quarters at six in the morning. The men all wore uniforms and, by constantly varying their route and the hour of their appearance at any given point, they contrived to make their scanty numbers tell to the greatest advantage.

But another influence worked with them, far more potent than numbers. Another power hovered over them, immeasurably strengthening their hands. They rode surrounded with the prestige of their fame.

This was the county that had bled and paid and bitten the dust for year on year at the whim of Israel Drake and of Carey Morrison.[1] These were the men — these silent men in sombre uniform, these "State Wildcats," these "Black Hussars" — who with a single stroke had delivered the county from Drake and Morrison as a child is delivered from a bad dream.

"If the State Police want a man out of here, they send him a postcard and he comes in," the saying ran. Quietly and without debate the people obeyed the State Police.

[1] Recounted in the narratives entitled "Israel Drake" and "The Coon-Hunters," in the *The Standard-Bearers*.

So the citizen guard, having made its observations, came back to the doctor, and said: "Now we will work with you, and do our best. We are satisfied that no one will attack us while the Troopers are on the job."

The accession of this aid greatly facilitated the Troopers' work. The citizen guards were in the main reliable and intelligent. Under proper protection they were efficient.

The local authorities now placed them wherever cases or contact cases were known to exist, and the Trooper patrols, arriving at unexpected moments, day or night, to inspect each post, inspired vigilance in the guards as well as obedience in the guarded. By this means the Troopers soon learned not only which of the deputies could really be trusted, but also which of the infected families were sufficiently intelligent and conscientious to be left unwatched. Once assured of this latter point, they procured the removal of the guard, liberating him for real service elsewhere.

Accompanying the Health Department doctors on trips of investigation, they saved much precious time merely by the attitude that their presence inspired. Again, they escorted the doctors on vaccination tours, producing orderly submission where without them no vaccination could have taken place. Often, at first, parents would send their children out into the woods to hide, at the news of the doctor's approach. Discovering this, the Trooper escort would lead the doctor away on his route and then, by a quick reverse, would bring him back through

the woods to the house. By this means they would catch the children returning to their homes, and then and there care for them. Often, also, it was necessary for the Trooper to stand by the patient's side, in an infected house, while the doctor worked. Thus each man in the detail grew familiar with the aspect and care of the disease in all degrees and stages.

Such familiarity became of inestimable value to them later on, as they extended their patrols into districts too sparsely settled or too distant for the busy doctors to visit except on positive knowledge of need. As they rode over the mountain trails, from cabin to cabin, or across country among the scattered valley farms, they took pains to acquaint themselves, in their friendly way, with the composition and the individuals of each household. When one was missing, they enquired where he had gone. If they learned or suspected that he was ailing, they managed a glimpse of him, and then their knowledge of the disease told them how to act.

Daily, as they discovered the presence either of the sickness or of contact cases, they were obliged to impose quarantine on new houses. And in remote points the imposition, so necessary to the general welfare, would have worked great hardship but for the passings of the patrol. The Trooper, on his daily round, would stop to enquire the condition and needs of the family, and would see, moreover, that those needs were supplied. He would get the message to the grocer or the druggist in the nearest settlement, and, whatever might have been his action otherwise, no grocer, no druggist, no purveyor of

any sort neglected a request made through the State Police.

In the course of this work, the Troopers acquired a minute knowledge of the entire countryside, and found and relieved many cases of acute suffering and destitution that must otherwise have gone on to a pitiful end.

Thus, early one morning, Trooper Kane himself, circling about the Mont Alto Sanatorium, on a five-mile radius, came upon a trail that suggested a dwelling somewhere back in the woods. Following it, he discovered a little frame house hidden away in the brush. It was paintless, grey, and weather-beaten. A gnarled old apple tree spread its arms before it, as though to protect it with the out-reaching hopes and care of an earlier and happier generation. But the little farming that had been done around it, in weedy and stunted rows, in sickly growths and crooked planting, told its own story of discouragement, weakness, and lack.

As Private Kane reined up his horse at the opening of the trail, and stood for an instant quietly looking at the house, its door opened. A man came out — a young man, dressed in the mountain garb. His bearing bespoke utter misery. Without so much as a glance about, he dropped down on the step and buried his head in his hands.

"Good-morning!" called Kane, riding closer.

The man raised his head. His eyes glittered with fever. The mark of the pest was upon him, strong and beyond dispute. But he made no reply.

The Trooper bethought himself. This must be

the man they talked about, down at the valley blacksmith shop — the trapper who had lived here all his life alone, until, some eight months since, he had married and brought a girl home to his solitary abode.

"How's your wife?" Kane essayed.

The question unlocked the other's lips. "She's sick!" he moaned, "awful sick. She's got a terrible pain in her side. And we ain't got no food in the house at all. And — I don't know what's come over me — but I can't seem even to tote my gun to go hunt her a little meat. She's starving."

Again his head dropped into his hands, his fingers clenched weakly in his sunburnt hair. The tears were splashing slowly on the doorstep.

"Cheer up!" said the Trooper. "I'll see to this. Do you have a family doctor?"

"No."

"Where does the nearest doctor live?"

"Down below. But he won't come here. I've sent for him different times, but he always says no. He knows we can't pay."

"How about groceries? Where do you deal?"

"We ain't got no money left, I tell ye. We can't get groceries nowhere, nor nothin' else."

Kane knew that the State Doctor could not be brought to that remote point before late afternoon; knew also that this household must be relieved immediately; further, that it lay outside of the confines of Franklin County, in the County of Adams.

So, hastening to the nearest telephone, he called up the Poor Department of Adams County, and offi-

cially notified it to send out a doctor and supplies at once.

The doctor, on his arrival, diagnosed the girl's trouble as appendicitis in an advanced stage, and confirmed the Trooper's judgment of the ailment of the husband. He then assumed general charge. But it remained incumbent upon the State Police, nevertheless, to see to the maintenance of quarantine.

Next day the sick girl died.

And then it appeared that all the mountain-side, that had taken no thought of her while she lived, that would have let her die of starvation, was bent on coming to her funeral! Now, half this ambitious public either actually had smallpox in a light form, or had been so much exposed to it as to be dangerous. Should such an assemblage take place, the other half could scarcely fail to be infected. Kane therefore forbade the funeral party. But, knowing the passion of the mountain-folk for that form of gathering, he dared not trust to their obedience. So he arranged that his best citizen allies should be stationed at the graveyard, in numbers sufficient to control the mountaineers, should they try to break through by force; and that others, meantime, should guard the infected house from curious visitors.

But now, as the hour drew near, the husband himself complicated the case, entreating to be allowed to go to the grave.

"Seems like I *couldn't* let no one else touch her," he moaned.

"Do you think it could be done?" asked the Trooper, moved by that piteous grief.

"Well," growled the doctor, "he'd have physical strength enough with the desire that's in him. But you know the danger as well as I do."

"I wish we could fix it, somehow. It surely is hard!"

"I'll tell you," the doctor conceded. "If you want to go with him yourself and see not one soul comes near, I'll say yes."

"All right, I'll do that much for the poor chap. Will you get word to the guards at the graveyard that they're dismissed, and tell them to tell the people I'm taking their place?"

"I'll do it myself," said the doctor, and hurried away.

The trapper owned no kind of wagon. All his little journeyings had been made on foot, or on the back of an old saddle horse, his wife riding pillion behind him. For work about his place, he had used a drag, such as Indians make of long sapling poles, two ends serving as shafts while the other two rest on the ground, supporting the burden between them. To-day it must serve for another purpose. There was nothing else to use.

Green branches lay in a heap by the doorstep. He had gone to the heart of the wood for them and had chosen the freshest. Now he led out his horse, harnessed between the shafts of the drag. Over its rough lashings he spread the boughs orderly, standing back to survey them with anxious eyes, covering here the brown of a branch, there taking away an imperfect leaf, while the Trooper, waiting apart, looked on in silence. At last, his preparations done, he disappeared into his house and shut the door.

Some moments passed without sound from within. Then the door opened, and the trapper came forth, bearing his dead in his arms. No need to ask whence came his strength to do it. Gently he laid her down on the boughs, tenderly he disposed her dress, and touched her soft yellow hair with his trembling fingers. There she lay, among the leaves of oak and ash, and the flowering laurel branches, her long hands folded on her breast, her young face turned up to the blue sky, white as the floating clouds and as peaceful.

A moment the two stood looking at her there. Then the sick man turned to the Trooper.

"I guess we'll be goin'," said he. "Come, Jim." And the old horse started down the leafy trail.

Under the arching green of hemlock and birch, over grey stones and thick, soft mosses, the ancient horse, lean and sunken-eyed, moved slowly with hanging head. At his bridle a man of body sick unto death, of heart more desolate, a man poor and weak and pitiful always. Then the couch of green boughs and rosy blossoms and the dead girl lying on it, sweet and holy, her white face turned to the sky. And last their one friend on earth — the tall young soldier in his rigid uniform, very sad and reverent.

So the branches close behind them, over the narrow trail, and they pass slowly on, unseen, to the burial-place.

In the little mountain graveyard, they found the grave dug, ready, a spade left sticking in the fresh earth heaped at its side. On the verge stood a rough pine box, its lid loose, a hammer and nails upon it.

Once more the sick man lifted his dead, and laid her down in that rude coffin, with the oak and the ash beneath her and the laurel near her face. Then the soldier nailed the lid fast, and so they two together lowered the coffin into its place. No clergyman was there, no minister, only those two, with old Jim and the dead.

They looked at each other, hesitating.

"I wish there could ha' been somethin' said..." murmured the man sick of a fever, his cracked lips quivering.

"...Could n't you say a prayer?" ventured the other.

"I never knowed a prayer in all my life. But — she'd ha' wanted it...she'd ha' wanted it bad."

Then the Trooper knew what was required of him. In all the years of his service his duty had come in multitudinous shapes, cast by the multitudinous sudden needs of the people. But this one thing had never come before. An enormous diffidence engulfed him, in which his brain gasped and drifted. But there lay that poor, bare coffin, waiting in the grave, and there were the hungry, helpless eyes of the man fixed upon him.

He stared back, blankly. He could not refuse. But where were the words? Where?...Then, like a fragment out of a dream he saw himself kneeling at the chancel rail, the chalice passing, heard the voice of the celebrant.

"I can only remember one little one..."

"Please!"

So the young soldier bared his head and knelt,

the other following. Very slowly he spoke — very clearly, very reverently:

"'The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.' Amen."

"Amen," echoed the sick man. Then he turned away and covered his ears with his hands, while the Trooper grasped the spade.

Endless were the deeds of mercy that the patrols performed while riding their long tours through regions but for them unvisited; merciful the order that they imposed, checking the spread of disaster. But the work, for themselves, was heavy. As to the horses, only by the best of care could they have borne such taxing.

At ten o'clock every night, at six o'clock every morning, when the patrols came off duty, each man worked long on his horse, rubbing him, bathing him, bandaging his legs, before giving a thought to his own comfort. And then, very frequently, when the horse was at ease, the man would start away on foot in pursuit of some extra service, unrelated to the quarantine work, and therefore to be undertaken only outside the hours of quarantine duty.

Acting according to the principle of The Force, Kane encouraged his men, on patrols, not to be content with the simple duty of the moment, but to take every opportunity to inform themselves of the character, general and particular, of the people among whom they passed. Stopping at the store or the blacksmith shop, calling on the doctor, they were

tactfully to feel out the personnel of the place. What wrongs had been done there in recent times? Who had gone to prison and why? In what manner had he done his deed? — down to the last detail. If he had since been released, what was his subsequent history?

All these matters Kane led his men to relate and talk over together when they met, at meals or elsewhere, in order to increase their general knowledge and to store their minds for future need. For it is a fact known to criminology that a man's style in crime is almost as distinctive as his style in handwriting. The whole State was the province of these young officers of the Law, and it behooved them to learn all that they could of the person and habits of every criminal therein.

Then the people themselves, appreciating their rare opportunity, and believing, apparently, that State Police officers were immune from need of sleep or rest, brought them a hundred requests for help in matters that they knew not how otherwise to handle. And the men's spirit was to rise to every emergency, out of pure good-will and ambition—never to say "enough."

A matter that cost them many a period of the sleep they had so richly earned by long hard hours of patrolling was the arrest of one Bill Barnes, undertaken at the request of the local authorities. Bill Barnes was the gadfly of his people — a sort of stinging will-o'-the-wisp, not deadly as yet, but irritating, destructive, subversive of peace. Many warrants were out against him, for assault and battery, malicious mischief, robbery. But to serve those warrants

was beyond the ability of the local powers. His delight was to terrorize the women at the times when the men were away at work — to enter their houses and demand food at the revolver's point. He revelled in sudden appearances at farmers' outdoor festivals, at church lawn-parties, and the like, when, for example, he would swagger into the place, seize an ice-cream saucer from the hands of a girl, whirl it high into the air, shoot it to bits as it whirled, kiss the girl, help himself to what he liked, shoot all the glasses from the telephone poles, and be off at his own good will protected by his proven skill in the arms he brandished.

He came of respectable village parentage, but his fancy was for the hills. He knew every trail in the mountains, and lived among the heights for considerable periods without any other shelter than such as he made from night to night of fresh cut boughs. On the lower slopes, in the valleys, he was as wary as a bird. In the high forest he mocked all pursuers. Moreover, when there, he was beyond any constable's jurisdiction.

If the Troopers, one or two of them, could have settled down to uninterrupted attention to the trail of Bill Barnes, it would have been another matter. But they could chase him only at intervals, when off quarantine patrol, in the time allotted them for sleep. Night after night, following some word of his whereabouts, the men jumped out of their beds and raced away in the dark. They could not use their horses, of course, for the horses must have their scanty rest; and that fact, too, added to the handicap.

All this contributed hugely to the gaiety of Bill Barnes. Often he would stop farmers, on some lonely road, relieve them of their tobacco and odd cash, and instruct them to carry an invitation to the State Troopers to come to an indicated point that night and take him. Often, again, he would actually accompany his own pursuers on a parallel line within the forest, observe their every move, and send them a jeering report of it afterward.

So, late one afternoon, word came to the Troopers' lodgings that Bill Barnes was in the vicinity of Beartown. The night patrol, off duty, led by Kane, immediately started for that region — a part into which their work had not taken them before. Making enquiries, they presently established the probable general location of their man. He was flying lower than was his habit, down on the tilled lands.

On this somewhat vague information, the detail was cutting across country when one of the men caught a glimpse that gave him pause. Through a break in the foliage, he could see a wheat-field, some eight acres broad. It covered a little hillock running up neatly from every side to a central height. Capping the height rose a great chestnut tree. In the topmost crotch of the chestnut, silhouetted against the sky, perched a man, busy about some small handiwork.

"That's no natural sight," said the officer to himself, and he pointed it out to the rest.

"I'll try stealing up on him," said Kane.

Softly, softly he stalked him, as he had learned to stalk in the Philippine bush. But the eyes of the

tree-man roved all abroad. He saw his pursuer when the latter was yet three thousand yards or more away. Like a flash he slid out of the tree, fleetly crossed the field, disappeared in the wood, and, a few minutes later, was screaming defiance from a high ledge far above.

"Come up and get me, you snails! You'll never get Bill Barnes!"

"He's right," said Kane to the rest. "We'll never catch him like this. With three minutes' start he can lose us in these woods any time. Moreover, we must n't hunt him every day. It keeps him too much on guard. But let's go over and see what he was doing up that tree, before we quit."

Under the tree, with some oily rags, lay other traces that told what had busied the bird that had flown. He had been cleaning his gun.

Now, Bill had a brother who lived in the mountain heights. His house stood in a small clearing cut out of the thick forest, and here, it was known, Bill sometimes came for food. The dense brush and timber that surrounded the place on three sides offered such facile escape, in the unlikely case of need, that he could feel but little danger there. So Kane, informed of the fact, now turned to the farmers on the encompassing slopes with the request that they send him word when they had knowledge of Bill's presence in his brother's house.

Willing enough they were to help, for all had suffered petty robberies, insolences, and fright at Bill Barnes's hands. The women in especial were keen to aid. And so it was by a farmer's wife that Kane

was called to the telephone one morning not long afterward.

"Bill Barnes has just gone up to his brother's place," said she. "Coming up the mountain just now, I saw him cutting across a clearing straight that way."

Private Rose lay asleep on his cot. He had been out on a more than commonly long and stiff patrol, and was now deep in his second hour's sleep.

"Rose!" said Kane.

"Huh?"

"Bill Barnes!"

Rose resurrected himself from the nethermost depths. It was like pulling the bottom out of the sea.

"Bill Barnes?" said he. "All right. Just let me put my head under the pump."

Meantime Kane was considering; he wanted a disguise that would carry him unsuspected into hands' reach of his man. Up in the hills, to the south of the point where Barnes was now supposed to be, lay the town of Penmar, astride the Pennsylvania-Maryland line. In summer Penmar was much frequented by Baltimoreans, including many college boys. And these people, in driving about over the mountains, not infrequently used the road that led past Bill's brother's house.

"We must get into civilian clothes," said Kane. Then they went out and bought themselves caps such as the holiday boys at Penmar were wearing, hired a horse and buggy at the livery stable, and started up into the heights.

As they neared their general field, Kane, who was driving, turned and inspected his companion with

more critical care. Dissatisfaction lingered in his look.

"Something's wrong with you, Rose," he said, at last. "I can't make out just what. Yes! That's it! Your shoulders. Can't you do something to them? Slouch, man! Take the life out of your spine."

Rose did his best to obey, but he, too, was staring critically at his comrade. "I don't know that Bill would notice it," said he, "but your face is all wrong. Can't you make your mouth sort of pulpy? And look fluffy all over? Like you were ninety per cent foolishness and ten per cent meat?"

Kane grinned. "I'll try that, too," said he. "It does n't sound hard. Now we must sing. We can't, but we've got to. *No!* Rose, 'He may be a brother to William H. Taft' *won't* do. Sing 'Old Black Joe.' All together!"

Carolling idly, they approached the house, passed it with no more than the casual glance of the strolling explorer, and drove on for a quarter of a mile beyond. There they turned, still singing, and retraced their route.

"This gives 'em a chance to have thought us over and sized us up," said Kane. "Now they'll make up their minds that we're only harmless youngsters from Penmar and won't suspect us. Whereas, if we'd got out of the buggy the first time past, Bill, if he's there, would have been off and away into the woods in no time."

Once more in front of the house they stopped, leisurely alighted, and made for the two doors, Kane taking the front, Rose the rear. They entered

simultaneously. The room had but a single occupant. That occupant was Bill Barnes, sitting eating at a table, squarely between them.

"Hello, Bill," said Kane.

"How are you?" responded Bill, a big piece of corncake in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other.

"Bill," pursued the Trooper, "we are officers of the State Police. I think you'll admit we've got you this time."

Bill Barnes gave the two men a long look. Rose had forgotten to slouch by now, and Kane had let his mouth go its own way. Then the wild man did a peculiar thing. Without a motion toward his side-arms, still clutching his rations, he swung around in his chair, and presented his feet to the view of his visitors.

"Look at them soles!" said he. "Look at them holes! That's come from running over the mountains. You fellows keep me on the jump. I'm tired of it. I'm glad, since it's you, that you've caught me. But"—and his face darkened—"if it had been that Constable down in the valley that tried it, *I'd 'a' killed him just as sure as I breathe.* . . . Can I have time to finish this meal?"

"Sure. Eat all you want," said Kane.

When he had done, the two Troopers took him in their buggy down to the valley town. All the way he chatted pleasantly, running over the incidents of the chase just ended. And he offered no resistance at all.

But in the valley, infinitely as the people rejoiced in his capture, mild as he now seemed, no one wanted to handle Bill Barnes. They knew that what he had

just protested as to their Constable, for example, was the bare truth.

"One more job, then, for the crew of the Captain's gig!" said Rose.

And so, next day, a Trooper, officially off duty, accompanied by Private Kane who was never off duty, being responsible for all, took Bill to Chambersburg, the county town, and delivered him into the hands of the Law. And the Law sent him to prison for a term of years.

The continuous warp of quarantine service, with all that it involved, was thus overlaid by a woof almost as continuous of incidental criminal cases to handle.

When a fine old Mennonite matron, dressed in the curious brown poke bonnet and the plain brown gown of her sect, walked into the Squire's office one evening and sternly demanded a warrant for a man's arrest, the Squire looked at her in blank surprise. "But," he protested, "I thought you Mennonites always fixed things up among yourselves! Do you want, really, to have recourse to warrants and courts and the like of that?"

"You know my daughter?" the woman rejoined, sombrely.

The Squire gave a mental start. He did know the girl, not yet fifteen, wonderfully pretty, already self-emancipated from "plain dress," definitely inclined to be reckless. He hoped that the little madcap had not already taken a step over the line.

"Our children are a mystery to us," the visitor went on. "My husband and I have always lived the

life that our religion ordains. We have been watchful in season and out of season, of thought and word and act. But our sons are lawless and bad. And now our daughter Molly is beyond our control. However, she is only a child yet, and a man who takes advantage of her childish folly should not be allowed to arrange privately for his wickedness. Regardless of the rule of our religion, I want a warrant for the man's arrest."

"I can give you the warrant," the Justice replied, "but — the man you name is so much respected — and he's very well off — it'll be hard to get that warrant served. They'll be afraid to do it, in fact."

"Then give it to me. I've seen the men that won't let an old mother ask in vain."

"Oh — the Troopers! That's so. Why, I'll turn it over to them myself."

And so, next morning, the day detail cut short its sleep by half to go out and arrest Molly's assailant before the hour should strike that must see it start on its proper duty.

Endless were the burdens so cast upon the State Police officers. Crop-thieves and cattle-thieves to catch; chicken-stealing to stop and punish; highway robbers to be found and arrested; yeggmen to be seized, and all superimposed on the quarantine work, not one iota of which could even be abated. No proper request, moreover, was refused, when a man remained available to respond to it.

Thus, when they came hurrying to Kane breathless with the news that Big Pat O'Day was drinking in

a tavern a few miles off. "What of it?" asked the Trooper.

"Why — you know, Big Pat O'Day, he's a bad man. There's several warrants here against him for horse-stealing. But he's one you can't take except by superior force. No Constable can lay hands on him. He'll fight. We thought mebbe you'd take the detail and go down."

"Detail's busy," said Trooper Kane. "But I'll send Private Tipton, here."

The deputation looked at Private Tipton, small of stature, with doubting eyes. Still — he was a "Black Hussar." You never could tell. Still, again, since you really never could tell, better keep out of a possibly losing game.

So they let Private Tipton go alone.

At the bar of the wayside tavern, Big Pat O'Day was yet drinking. By no means, however, had he reached his limit, and his brain was clear. Big Pat O'Day stood six feet four in his stockings, and as he looked down on Private Ralph Tipton's five feet six, he laughed.

"You have a warrant for Pat O'Day, thin, me bold little man?"

"That's what I said."

"Well — you don't expect to serve it, do you?"

"I certainly do."

"Say, boys, look here at this!" cried the giant, shaking in his mirth. "Me that's never been taken by less than four huskies and that by surprise."

The room roared with him, with much slapping of knees.

Private Tipton was in uniform, and of course armed. But he thought nothing of his weapons; he wanted no advantage. And he was angry. Planting himself squarely before the horsethief, he looked straight up in his face.

"Listen to me!" he snapped. "You are under arrest. And if you're too blamed hulking to be carried in one piece, *I'll break you in two and take half at a time. Surrender!*"

Big Pat O'Day, looking down from his great height, felt something that stopped his mirth. "All right," said he, quite meekly. "I'll go with you."

Without further ado, he went.

Little by little, by steady progress, the pestilence sank, the death-rate lowered. But not until three months had passed was the quarantine raised. Then, in an hour, off rode Kane and his men, across country in a hurry on a new mission, this time to exorcise burglars from clamoring Huntington County.

Recorder's Note: This narrative contains three departures from fact. The name "Kane" is not the true name of the trooper concerned; in no other instance or narrative has the name of a member of The Force been altered. Also, the names "Molly" and "Big Pat" are substitutes.

IX

CUT-BEANS & COMPANY

On January 6, 1919, at a quarter to two o'clock in the afternoon, the telephone orderly at the Barracks of "A" Troop, Pennsylvania State Police Force, received over the wire and duly recorded the complaint of one Louis Tosta, to the effect that his uncle, Tony Canello, had been shot. Pure murder, wailed Tosta, in vehement, shattered English, demanding redress.

No, Canello was not yet actually dead. But he had n't the ghost of a chance — as the *carabinieri*, by asking the hospital, might very well learn for themselves.

Oh, the Mount Pleasant Hospital. Yes. And, please, *please* hurry up!

Now, "A" Troop's Barracks are at Greensburg, Westmoreland County. And Mount Pleasant, as the crow flies, lies distant from Greensburg not much over fourteen miles. Omitting the always irrelevant crow, you may more than double the figure. And the Trooper detailed to the call, plain clothes, dismounted, did well to reach the scene near dusk of the short winter day.

Even then, however, he came too late. For, as he reached the hospital, Tony Canello, in order that the surgeons might probe for bullets, was already descending into that shapeless, choking, surging void upon whose hither shore he was never to emerge.

Therefore, while life yet drifted between two worlds, the State Trooper, waiting in the hospital anteroom, received the statement of Louis Tosta in all the detail that Tosta would give.

The statement ran thus: Louis Tosta, twenty-three years old, lay asleep in his own bed, in Mount Pleasant, on the night of January 5th, when, at about twenty minutes after nine o'clock, a neighbor, beating at the door, shouted to him that his uncle Tony was shot. Springing up, Louis dashed for his uncle's boarding-house — only a block or so away — there to find Canello in the kitchen, lying in a chair, and so ghastly of mien that Louis's very brain bleached with fear, leaving him but one sensation — an impulse for flight.

So, he ran again — this time for refuge with his older cousin, Tony Splendora, to whom he told the little he had seen.

Splendora, who was also a nephew of Canello, was also abed and asleep when the messenger of evil arrived. Splendora, too, sprang up. And, because a man who never undresses needs no time to dress, he instantly led the way back to the boarding-house.

Canello, by now, had been carried to his bed. And some twenty Italians, relatives and friends, already surrounded him, raising the while a racket of tongues.

"Uncle, are you hurt? Who shot you?" cried Splendora from the doorway.

Canello answered, clear, though faint:

"Dominic shot me. Tagliafasuli."

And all the people heard him.

Now "Tagliafasuli," meaning "cut-beans," is a nick-

name common enough. Still, none of the twenty-odd could recall having known it as applied to any in their present ken save one alone — Dominic Doro.

Later, before they took him to hospital, Canello revived a bit. Then he told them all that he seemed to know, going over it again and again. He had been spending the day at the farm of a friend, he said, helping to butcher a pig. At about nine o'clock, he left the farm, carrying a dish of meat in his hand, to return to his boarding-house. On his way thither, within a few rods of the boarding-house door, some one fired at him from behind — fired five shots, from a revolver, all of which missed.

Wheeling, he saw, almost within arm's reach, an unknown man, and sprang for him. In the same instant the man turned and fled.

But Canello, overtaking the runner, whirled him around, flung him, and knelt on his chest. Then it was that he recognized Dominic Doro.

"Tagliafasuli!" he had exclaimed in utter amazement. "Corpo di Baccho, boy, what ails you!"

"Tony Canello, my dear friend, I did not know it was *you* I shot at," panted the fugitive, as the clutch on his throat relaxed. "*You* are not the man I wanted!"

And with that, by a catlike twist of the wrist, he fired his sixth shot, pressing the gun into Canello's ribs.

Sharp on the crack of the report, two more rang out, but from behind. Then, as the victim rolled on his back, rose a clatter of feet running away.

Canello lay still for a moment, in the mud of the

road, listening, trying to pull himself together. After that, he staggered along to his boarding-house, alone.

"Well, that's about all, I guess," concluded Louis Tosta, in the hospital anteroom.

Whereon a doctor, pushing open the anteroom door, inserted the finale:

"He's gone."

So the "A" Troop man, his hope of an ante-mortem statement dashed, went forth upon the job; with the result that within the next twenty-four hours, he knew, from several sources, these things:

First, that three Italians, Dominic Doro, Clemento Pizzini, and Sam Pepper-Nose, all laborers in the Rainey Mine, all of Mount Pleasant, had been seen in the neighborhood of the shooting on the night of January 5th; second, that three men, description unknown, had been seen running from near the point where the shooting occurred at the time of its occurrence; third, that Doro, Pizzini, and Pepper-Nose, all three, were now missing; and that their homes, under search, revealed no hint of their whereabouts.

The State Trooper covered the pay-checks of Doro, Pizzini, and Pepper-Nose, so that they could not be delivered into any hand without his knowledge, took certain other measures, and then reported to Barracks.

The findings of the Coroner's jury stood:

Gunshot wound of chest and abdomen.

Shooting done by one not known to us.

Recommended, that the District Attorney make further investigation.

In due course of handling, the State Police carried on with the case until a day late in February when one line of effort bore sudden fruit. Word came in that Clemento Pizzini, Dominic Doro, and Sam Pepper-Nose were living at 425 Baltimore Street, Clarksburg, West Virginia; that the first was forking coke in some coke-works, precise identity unknown; that the other two men were probably though not certainly working in the same place; and that more information might possibly follow.

The immediate result of which was that, at three o'clock on the afternoon of February 26th, Private John J. Russell, "A" Troop, P.S.P.F., started for Clarksburg, West Virginia.

"You will proceed to Clarksburg, West Virginia," said the Top Sergeant, "and if possible apprehend upon warrant the three Italians, Pepper-Nose, Doro, and Pizzini, suspected of the murder of Tony Canello at Mount Pleasant on January 5th. Plain clothes."

Then he gave him the street address, together with such descriptions of the suspects as lay in hand. For once, the traits seemed rather original.

Pizzini, for instance, five feet eight inches tall, weighing one hundred and seventy pounds, forty years old, body erect, pock-marked, bore in the palm of his right hand a bullet scar which had caused a permanent swelling.

Doro, four inches shorter than Pizzini, but his equal in age, high of cheek-bone and hollow-cheeked, had very big feet which he displayed in a peculiar, spreading walk.

Pepper-Nose, of Doro's height, five years his senior, stooping considerably, was the site of a wild, long, bulbous, bright-crimson beak. Whence the nickname that, among his acquaintances, entirely supplanted his patronymic.

And it was with these three pictures in mind that Private Russell, arrived in Clarksburg, West Virginia, early on the morning of February 27th, approached the Baltimore Street number.

A disorderly resort it proved to be, operating under cover of a pool-room and fruit-store. But, although it was run by Italians for Italians and abundantly so patronized, Russell's all-day watch discovered never a sign of those he sought.

After dark, then, the Trooper *incognito* betook himself to his natural ally, the Sheriff of the County. And Sheriff Griffen, all courtesy to the officer of the neighbor State, placed at his disposal whatever information might lie with Jimmy Burgess, local police adept in Italian affairs.

"Will you give me a hand?" asked Russell.

Said Jimmy, "Sure thing. What's it called?"

So the two went together to Clarksburg Police Station.

"Now I want you, if you will, to check over the lists of arrests made during the last few weeks, and, when we come to Italian names, to tell me what you know about the individual. Does that go?"

"Sure thing," said Jimmy Burgess.

For a while and a while they worked, the local officer displaying true familiarity with his public; yet without uncovering anything that Russell could

recognize as his clue. Until they fell upon the name of Mike Sica.

"Well, Sica, now," Jimmy commented, "that's just one of the typical toughs. Lives over in Grant Town, as this record says. Let's see, what *do* I know in particular about him: not much in the way of high lights. He's a Black Hand leader in his district. He used to frequent the house on Baltimore Street pretty regular. Guess he was tied up fairly close with Box-Car, the chap that ran it."

Next morning, then, saw Russell in Grant Town, over to the west of Fairmount, quietly looking for the abode of Mike Sica. Now, if you want to know how such things are done without starting a whisper of alarm through an ever-suspicious under-world, study the ways of The Force. But the outcome, this time, was as always — Russell located his man, making not one soul the wiser. Also he finally determined the disappointing fact that Clemento Pizzini, having been in Grant Town, had just taken flight. Finally, because it suited the game he meant to play, should unfolding conditions so direct, he enlisted the help of the Town Constable — without, however, confiding details.

Sica's shack, a miners' boarding-house, stood — or slunk — in the very heart of the Italian quarter. Nothing could well have been dirtier, meaner, more forbidding. And the scene surrounding — filthy alleys ending in old black mine caverns; filthy shanties, repulsive as wood and stone can never be until enslaved as mirrors by human mind; filthy heaps of malodorous débris blocking yards and footpaths; all

alike pervaded by an intangible something lurking, evil, malign — the scene surrounding reached a fitting climax in Mike Sica's villainous shack.

Now, Russell knew that Mike's boarders worked on day-shift. Waiting, therefore, till the most distant of them had had time to reach home — waiting until supper was about to ensure their presence, he gathered up his Constable and moved upon the shack.

A swarm of Italians filled the alley, idling, waiting to be called to food.

"If this lot guessed what I am, and what I've really come for," said Russell to himself, as he eased through the crowd, "there'd be one more Trooper gone West to-night — maybe!"

But not even the eyes of that sensitive public could detect, in the futile, purposeless figure that slouched in the wake of the Constable anything more significant than the common village hanger-on of whatever shows motion.

The Constable led the way into Mike Sica's kitchen. And spoke, as previously directed:

"Mike," said he, addressing the man that came forward, "there's been a little trouble over to Clarksburg. In Box-Car's old place. Seems somebody opened a trunk and took one hundred and twenty dollars out of the pocket of a feller's coat. I'm lookin' for Luigi Matrone. Matrone belongs in Clarksburg, but it's thought he come over here. I said you know 'most everybody and I'd ask you if you could help us."

"No," answered Sica, readily enough. "I never heard of him, even."

Which was likely enough, since Luigi, quite simply, was a creature of Russell's invention.

Meantime, the attention of the Constable had been invisibly guided to a figure that stood by the stove stirring a pot — a figure some five feet five inches tall, stooping considerably, a figure to be known among thousands by its blazing, chaotic beak.

"Who's that over there?" he asked.

"Oh, that ain't no Luigi Matrone," Mike answered confidently. "That ain't nobody but just old Pepper-Nose. I know *him*, right enough!"

"I'm afraid we'll have to take him, though." This from Russell, speaking for the first time.

Mike started. But the Constable hastened to assure him.

"You see, Mike," said he, "some of the girls over in Baltimore Street think it was a feller called Pepper-Nose, answerin' to the description of that gentleman over there, that took the money. No doubt your friend can clear it all up, but meanwhile I'll have to ask him to come along. This here gentleman with me is all right. He's a special officer, from Clarksburg."

Pepper-Nose, auditor to all that had passed, looked at Russell and grinned. But some one else laughed aloud. Following its curiosity, the street crowd had already packed itself into the room, behind the two visitors. And Pepper-Nose, ladle still in hand, stood staring back into that crowd, his grin changed to a scowl.

"So you laugh, Dominic!" he snarled.

Again the laugh, ringing with contempt, as a man

pushed to the front, the better to flaunt his mirth. He was younger than the pot-stirrer, high of cheek-bone and hollow of jaw. And, now that he came full length into view, it appears that his feet were more than common large and that he moved with them splayed, like a duck.

"*You* only smiled, old fool," the newcomer flung back — "you smile to think this boob from Clarksburg should talk about pinching *you*. But I, I *laugh* — and I laugh for the other way 'round!"

"Dominic?" drawled the boob dully, "Dominic Doro? Guess we'll need him, too."

"What's that?" Still the voice of the laugher, hard and loud.

"Dominic Doro, I said," drawled the special from Clarksburg, stupid-eyed.

"Dominic nothing" — now a sharp note of nervousness in the tone. "My name's Tony. Tony Matrimony from Jersey City, before I came to this town."

Pepper-Nose flashed a ragged row of teeth, yet this time held his peace.

The special officer persisted, mild as skim-milk under a pump. "*Looks* like the other man the girls said, he does. Likely there's nothing in it — but it seems's if I'd oughter take him too."

The laugher's hand moved toward his hip.

"Now, now, boys," the Constable interposed nervously, "no guns. You all know me. We're all friends here. I don't believe, myself, that neither one of you had anything to do with that coat business, nor the one hundred and twenty dollars that was stole — not a bit. But it's easy proved. All you got

to do is to show 'em. And you'll just get into trouble for nothin' if you go to work resistin' the law now. So mosey along peaceable with our brother, here. You'll be back here on your jobs to-morrow, comfortable as you like, and no harm done anywhere. Why, I'm goin' with you myself, as far's Grant Town Centre."

And the good Constable spoke the more convincingly because he spoke what he took for the truth.

Together, the two officers escorted the pair out of Sica's shack and through the crowded alleys. News of the triviality of the charge spread before them; besides which, the Constable had never been formidable, therefore never really objectionable, in their eyes. And whereas a rescue might have been attempted had more been at stake, a matter as slight as this interested no one.

Obviously, too, the prisoners had lately quarrelled and were yet at odds; which contributed its mite to delay their collusion. And the Constable's argument, to men habitually tampering with the law, held weight. Why add black marks, in cold blood, and for little or nothing, to police records already overlong?

So it happened that, although he lost his ally at Grant Town Centre, the unimpressive "special from Clarksburg" succeeded without change of front in landing his captives in Fairmount and the County Jail.

But, as the great gate clicked behind them, the two looked at their escort with dropped jaws. What had come over him? There he stood, physically just

as they had seen him from the first. Maybe he had given his cap a twitch — but was that enough to transform in a flash a stupid, inanimate yokel into — What could have come over the man?

At midnight the first train pulled out for Clarksburg and the north. Very quietly Russell shepherded his charges, now disarmed of an interesting collection of guns and knives, on board that train. At nine o'clock in the morning of March 4th, Dominic Doro and Pepper-Nose, heavy-eyed, walked wearily into the barracks of "A" Troop, Pennsylvania State Police, followed at two paces by Private John Russell in a dubious frame of mind.

He had been absent from station exactly five days and nineteen hours, travelling three hundred and ninety miles. He had brought back two thirds of that for which he was sent. But only two thirds. And it had cost more time than he liked.

Yet the word that he got from his Captain was kind. "Very good — as far as you've got," said the Captain. "*Now*, what we want is a case. Up to this moment we have only the dying declaration of Tony Canello. It is n't enough. You will proceed to Mount Pleasant, to continue investigation."

In Mount Pleasant, nothing, Russell found, had developed regarding the Canello affair during his own voyage over the border.

The next three days went in listening to tales and securing statements — sheaves of statements, from witnesses of such aspects of the case as were yet known. All the company that had crowded about Tony Canello's bedside when he lay wounded in his

boarding-house testified to the same story that Louis Tosta had originally told.

Everybody, in fact, agreed to the accusation of Tagliafasuli, whom everybody knew. But not one could tell why Tagliafasuli should have attacked poor Tony. Not one had heard of a hard word between them. And Tony himself, they said, in dying, had moaned again and again: "Tagliafasuli was a friend of mine. Why did he want to do it?"

"Yes, why did he do it?" Private Russell repeated. "That's exactly the question. Why?"

Then, on the 7th of March, came a ray. Lieutenant McCulley, of the Mount Pleasant Police, specialist in Italiana, became aware of a voice that would speak to him only, but which, the Lieutenant intimated, might, even so, be overheard. The voice, all well, might become articulate that very next morning at eight, in a private room in the Borough Building itself.

"May I?" asked Russell of Sam Stevens, Burgess of the town.

"You may that!" answered the sporting Burgess; "and especially if you'll let me in on it!"

So Russell, sending to Barracks for the Troop dictograph, rigged it up in the "private chamber" of the Borough Building. Then, when the time came, he betook himself, with Burgess Sam Stevens and the District Attorney's stenographer, to the other end of the wire. The three men took turns at the disc. And this, in gist, was what they heard:

One Frank Diale, miner, of Mount Pleasant, had paid Clemento Pizzini, now a fugitive from justice,

sums totalling three hundred and twenty dollars to kill Tony Canello. Pizzini, in pursuit of their agreement, had impressed Tagliafasuli and Pepper-Nose into his service. Pizzini, as Chief of the local Black Hand, could of course impress whom he chose. Yes, the speaker himself belonged to the Society. Therefore he could — and would — furnish the names of his fellow-members. Which he forthwith did at length, while the clerk of the District Attorney worked fast at the other end of the line.

His own name? Ah, Pietro Celli. And he hoped the Lieutenant would remember him with favor. For he was a very honest and a very needy man. More, even, he could tell: by to-morrow night he should know where the Society's next meeting would be held. To-morrow night he would bring the Lieutenant the information. Then the officers could raid the place. Only, he asked that they should not fail to arrest him, Pietro, with the rest. So that suspicion might not fall upon him. If suspicion did fall on him — Good-night, poor Pietro!

Whereat, having finished, he left the room — while the Burgess, the Trooper, and the clerk each took a good look through a peephole.

That afternoon an untoward thing happened: a Mount Pleasant paper, through West Virginia correspondence, announced the arrest of Tagliafasuli and Pepper-Nose.

The Italian element, heretofore in the dark as to the fact, buzzed with excitement. The Black Hand, in particular, grew uneasy to a man. Who, they asked each other, had informed? Who would most profit,

Pizzini fled, by the complete wiping-out of Tagliafasuli, next in succession? This one? Too dull. That one? Too timorous. Pietro Celli? Aha! — Ambitious, idle, steel-nerved, money-mad. Aha! *Aha!*

From that moment Pietro Celli never could manage to walk in any street unattended — never could move alone. Always and always some friend clung to him. And that friend, by coincidence, was ever a companion of the Black Hand.

Therefore poor Pietro's contribution of light snuffed utterly out — first incident in a period of staleness in which it became necessary to release Pepper-Nose for lack of evidence. Other Italians who had been on the verge of talking drew back into their shells with a terrified click; and Private Russell's job began to look a job indeed.

Whereupon the next wheel turned.

The Black Hand struck.

On the night of April 13th, the Black Hand cut Pietro Celli's throat.

Tiring, apparently, of the fear of possible betrayal, they decided to cancel fear at a blow. And the way of it was this:

Frank Diale — he whom Pietro had named in the hearing of unseen witnesses — Mike Diale, Frank's nephew, and Pietro himself, the Doomed, that night sat together at wine in a little alley saloon much frequented by their brotherhood, Pietro, lynx-eyed, ready to jump, watching his companions as they watched him, while all three laughed and harangued each other on affairs remote from their thoughts.

More than common did Pietro's nerves stare and weave — more than common even for these tense days. Furthermore, he had no gun. No gun.

Suddenly sitting there among his friends, in the wine-shop, he became aware of a very great desire for a gun. Usually a man could do well enough with a knife. But to-night — and with that, as if to taunt him, some chance newcomer lurched against a coat-rack on the wall beyond the door, started its lank, long burden swaying, and thereby momentarily revealed a shotgun braced against the wall.

"Alas!" thought poor Pietro — "too far off! Too big, and too far off."

Then, with a yawn, young Mike Diale got up — strolled toward the door — stepped out into the alley and the dark.

When Mike had been a moment gone, "Let's see what that rascal is up to outside in the dark. Jollying a girl, I'll bet. Come and have a peek," chuckled old Frank Diale, jovial, ingenuous, nudging Pietro in the ribs as he rose.

Pietro dared not hesitate. And Frank, ceremoniously deferring to him, ushered him first through the door.

"Look! Is n't that Mike, with that other fellow, just beyond there?" Frank whispered, linking his arm in Pietro's and pulling him along ten paces or so, close up to two men strolling ahead.

"*Salute!*" cried Frank. At the word the two ahead wheeled about, while Pietro's arms were clamped fast to his body in Frank Diale's embrace.

Then came that hideous, slashing blow.

hey had forgotten: Frank Diale,
ears old, was stiff with ancient
tro, small, wiry, and not much over
possessed, beside his physical ad-
y spirit. Wounded though he was,
of mind over body he writhed him-
rank's grip, eluded the spring of the
k to the door of the saloon, ripped
t from behind the coat-rack, and was
assailants before they had recovered
surprise.
you sheep!" he screamed, and, raising
t Mike Diale straight through the

o himself dropped in his tracks, drenched
st-flowing blood.
y brought him into the hospital he had

't live," said the doctors.
e's got to live!" said Private Russell. "I
without that lad!"
days later, Pietro's dynamic vitality stirred
y. Pietro might recover — might soon be
red to his proper place, the jail.
t," said Private Russell to the District
ey, "I think you'll agree with me that in the
ty Jail he has n't a Chinaman's chance for his
His friends of the Mane Nero will move heaven
earth to get at him. And if you send him to
they'll reach him and finish him there, as sure
to-morrow's sun. Will you commit him to the
dy of the State Police, to ensure his safe-

keeping till he turns State's evidence in the May term of Court?"

"I will," said the District Attorney. "I do."

So, on the 19th of April, Private Russell tenderly conveyed to "A" Troop Barracks a very pale, very limp, very helpless little Italian, unlovely to see, unlovely by reputation, yet who was, at that moment, the most precious object in Private Russell's entire field of thought.

"His life is all we've got! — And him with his throat cut!" sighed Russell to the Top. "We must treat him like a cherub in an incubator. He's *got* to pull through."

Meantime, old Frank Diale's trail, on the night of the killing of Mike Diale, had come under Private Russell's eye. Not yet had little Pietro Celli regained the power of memory and speech; nevertheless enough had been clear to warrant Frank's arrest. And now, as the old man sat in "A" Troop's Barracks cell, his habitual hard assurance began to suffer twinges — awkward, disconcerting twinges, at dangerous moments, like the twinges in those traitor arms that loosened just in time to let a desperate man reach a gun. For Pietro Celli should be dead. But Pietro Celli wasn't dead. He stuck alive. And as long as that error remained unrectified, Pietro might talk.

So, deliberate, cautious, old Frank composed a tale — from chosen fragments. And on that 16th of April on which the doctors gave out the discouraging news that Pietro Celli might live, old Frank decided to speak.

This in essence was the story that Private Russell heard from withered lips:

"I myself am a poor, crushed victim of the Mane Nero — the terrible Black Hand. Last October I was blackmailed out of forty dollars — ten dollars from my pocket and thirty dollars from my second next pay. It was that wicked man, Clemento Pizzini, who took it from me — my poor bit of money, so hard-earned by these old hands. He said he would cut my face if I did not pay him those forty dollars. So I paid — ten, first, in his house, and the other in the alley by the saloon.

"Then, in November, he took two dollars more off me — to help pay the thirty-dollar fine that Pepper-Nose got for having a revolver in his shack.

"Again, last Sunday night, Mike Diale, just a little hour before Pietro Celli killed him, told me that I must give ten dollars to help pay for a lawyer for Dominic Doro — Tagliafasuli, who is in jail.

"And on January 6th, the day after Tony Canello was killed, when I was at the Italian Club at Mount Pleasant, I was asked for two hundred dollars to pay for getting Clemento Pizzini, Dominic Doro and Pepper-Nose out of the country.

"I gave the money — they would have killed me if I had refused — to Mike Diale, there in the club-room. I had to sell a Liberty Bond to get the cash together.

"I sold the Liberty Bond to Jacobson, the clothier, for ninety-eight dollars — bought a pair of felt boots and paid Jacobson with the bond. Then I took the money and carried it to those two men. And they

took it to Scottsdale, where Pizzini and Tagliafasuli and Pepper-Nose were waiting for it. To-day I tell the truth."

Jacobson, the clothier, being questioned, substantiated the cynic fact covering the cashing of the Liberty Bond.

And Private Russell, as he continued to move in the Italian world concerning the case, became aware of an ever-increasing current among the better-class Italians tending to rebellion against a tyranny that had borne heavily and long.

"I think," he reported to his commanding officer on the night of April 18th, "that the time is ripe to get all of them to tell their wrongs. For they are gaining in courage since Clemento Pizzini is a fugitive, and Mike Diale killed. To-day four victims have told me of their losses. Pietro Celli's record, none too clean, has not been forgotten, but much has been forgiven him since he killed Mike Diale in self-defence."

Three days later, on April 21st, came a concrete evidence, seemingly, of the justice of this view. Russell received over the telephone a mysterious message asking him to go that night, at a fixed hour, to the alley back of the Mount Pleasant Borough Building, there to meet a man whose name might not be revealed, but who would give a pass-word, and who had news to impart.

Half-choked with ash-cans and heaps of boxes was the alley — narrow, tricky and inky dark, full of excellent ambushes. And yet, Private Russell, entering, unlimbered for action and aware of many things,

inclined to believe in the good faith of the unknown he came to meet.

Where was he, then? — And with that something stirred in the blackness just ahead of him — something detached itself from a mass that had seemed all one — and a man — two men — three men — stood in his path.

"Signor Carabiniere," murmured the first, "I am he who spoke to you over the telephone. These two are my friends, and they will watch while we talk. Let us fall back and I will speak. But very low."

Fifty feet or so he led the way, back into the lumpish, close-set dark. Then, flattening himself against the wall, with the barest thread of a voice he began to talk.

"I am afraid. We are all afraid, and in much trouble. Wherever we look we see nothing but evil crowding down. The Black Hand owns us — sucks us dry of all we earn — makes us criminals. And when we are criminals, there are the Carabinieri, most terrible of all, set against us. The Black Hand promises us protection, and gives us small gifts. But its true wages is death. We have all been bitterly afraid — eaten alive with fear. Our lives have been worthless.

"Yet now some of us hope. The Carabinieri have fixed their eyes upon us, and already, whether by captures or by flights and deaths grown out of those captures, many of the worst of our tyrants are suddenly gone. So, we think it is best — some of us think it is best and others are yet considering — *I* think it is best — to go over to the Carabinieri,

whose strength is not a thing of Fortune's passing favor, and whose memory is longer than the memory of the Mane Nero, because, the Carabinieri never die.

"Now, therefore, I will tell my part:

"One night, during the influenza, last October, Clemento Pizzini found me at the Italian Club, in Mount Pleasant, and told me to go at once to his house.

"I went. One obeyed Clemento Pizzini.

"At his house, besides Clemento himself, I found Dominic Doro, called Tagliafasuli, Pepper-Nose, Mike Diale, Pietro Celli, the bar-tender of the Italian Club, and some sixteen others.

"'You must join this Society of ours,' Clemento told me. 'That is why you are here.'

"I said I would join. One obeyed Clemento.

"So they initiated me. And at the end we all stood in a circle with our arms folded, looking at the floor. And we said: 'Red, white and green are our sacred colors. Red is for faith, white is for purity of purpose, green for the grass that covers the dead.'

"'Now,' said Clemento, 'you will be protected. And your enemies will be taken care of by the Society. Also, you need not pay your grocery bill that you owe to the grocer. Pay it to Mike Diale. Pay all your bills hereafter to Mike Diale and he will fix any one who asks you for money. Furthermore, you will pay Mike Diale fifty dollars club dues now.'

"Nothing was said about the Black Hand. But that was not necessary. One understood.

"Two weeks later they told me that the Society would meet again and that I must come. That time,

I heard Clemento Pizzini, who was chief of our organization, Mike Diale, and the bar-tender of the Italian Club, all talking of cutting or shooting any one who had money and would not pay it to them. And they explained that it would be every member's duty to assist in this when ordered.

"Another time I was summoned to Clemento's house. This was still in October, and the same gang gathered. That night old Frank Diale joined the Society. He paid forty dollars down. While we initiated him, Pietro Celli, he whose throat is cut, stood outside on watch.

"As soon as the ceremony was done, old Frank drew Clemento away into a corner and whispered. Then Clemento came back and spoke to us all.

"'Frank Diale, here, wants Tony Canello's face slashed,' said he. 'He will pay me, as Chief of the Society, one hundred dollars. He will also pay twenty-five dollars apiece to the two men who do the cutting.'

"Nearly every one objected a little. 'Why should anybody want to cut Tony Canello?' some asked. 'He's such a good, mild fellow, and never would hurt a fly.'

"But Clemento scowled. '*I'll* teach you how to pick and choose,' he said. And Mike Diale called out:

"'Why don't you make a decent job of it, while you are about it? How much will you pay to have him finished — killed?'

"'What would that cost, Clemento?' asked old Frank.

"'That'll cost you a thousand dollars,' says Clemento, very business-like.

"'No, No!' Old Frank shook his head. 'I'll have to be satisfied with slashing his face. I'm only a poor man. A hundred, plus the two twenty-fives, is all I can afford to invest for my friend Tony Canello just now.'

"I heard nothing more about that particular case that night and don't know who was appointed to do whatever was to be done.

"One last time, then, I went again to the meeting. That was just before Tony Canello was killed. I came, and I told Clemento that I could not come any more. Because my wife was getting angry with me for running with his crowd.

"'You lie!' cried Clemento, raging.

"Then, the very night that Tony was shot, Clemento passed me in the Italian Club and struck me on the back.

"'The Society has no use for quitters,' he said.

"By that I knew my turn was next. From that moment I have walked with my chin on my shoulder, in deadly fear — till now, by the favor and the might of the Carabinieri, comes this great new hope."

That same night — inside the hour, indeed — all this story, set down in black and white and duly sworn to, bore the narrator's signature and the signature of three good witnesses — Private Russell, Burgess Sam Stevens, and Officer McCulley, of the local police.

And within the next two days the dam broke. Just as Russell had foreseen, hope and revolt, born of the

recent upheavals, spreading rapidly through the Italian populace, pressed toward relief in speech. One man, accompanied by his wife, sought opportunity to tell the State Trooper, whom they regarded as their surest friend, how the Society had sent them its messengers awhile before, demanding fifty dollars; in default of which the husband should be killed and his body left in the ditch. Having but five dollars in all the world, they gave those five to the messengers, borrowed the rest from fellow-Italians, and paid all.

A second complainant told how Clemento Pizzini, Mike Diale, and Pietro Celli — he whose throat was cut — descended upon him in his home one evening and extorted one hundred and fifty dollars — all his savings — quite baldly "for permission to live." And so on, until scores of Italians, from the poorest to those well and comfortably placed, had contributed testimony as to personal penalties and sufferings long endured in silence, at the will of the Black Hand.

Borne on the current came many odds and ends of evidence, contributory to an understanding of things lately past. By the mouths of various witnesses, for example, did the motive of old Frank Diale in desiring and encompassing the end of Tony Canello appear.

Going back to the beginning of this story — to the account given by the victim himself, Tony Canello, just before his death — it will be remembered that Tony said he had been spending the day before the fatal night at the farm of a friend, helping to butcher a pig. This friend had a wife, Catarina, blameless and unblamed. And if Tony Canello, even in her

husband's absence, once and again dropped in to pass the day with a pleasant woman, mistress of a better, cleaner house than most, no one had thought of wagging a scandalous tongue.

No one but Frank Diale, that shifty-eyed, weazened old fox.

But even Frank Diale had not scented his scandal except by the aid of an ancient rancor in his own mind. Years ago, it appeared, he and Tony Canello had quarrelled about some trifle — some trifle so small that no one now could remember its name.

No one but Frank Diale — that shifty-eyed, venomous, weazened old fox. But Frank Diale had nursed his grudge, unsatisfied, through the years. So now, when he saw Tony sitting at ease in his friend's good house, the hungry grudge blazed up again, like a bed of coals in a fresh draught.

And it was for that — just for that and nothing more — that Tony Canello died. For that did old Frank Diale deliberately join the Black Hand and ask for bids on Tony's head. That gauzy nothing gave cause enough and to spare, in the minds of old Frank and his consorts — so little is the value of a human life.

As the days of the trials approached, evidence enough to convict ten times over poured into the hands of the State Police. One man only, Frank Girolamo, bar-tender of the Italian Club, witness and participant of many crimes, conceived all bargaining for escape hopeless. He threw himself into the lake and drowned.

But, the trial once on, it became all too clear that

the panic astir in the air was by no means confined to guilty men. The defence fought hard. Mobs of Italians, crowding the court-room and the corridors, working, as ever in such cases, to intimidate witnesses, worked as ever on the fears of the jury. Regardless of evidence and proof, by no means would that jury stick for a verdict of first degree.

The Black Hand knows that in many regions it can practically count on getting nothing worse than a second degree, however flagrant the case. After which, there is always the Pardon Board. So, cheer up.

Dominic Doro, Tagliafasuli, murderer of Tony Canello in the coldest of cold blood, got a sentence of imprisonment for eighteen to twenty years. Old Frank Diale, the mainspring and instigator of the whole affair, having stood up in court and pleaded guilty to murder in second degree, which plea was backed by his own confession and by several witnesses, old Frank Diale was sentenced by the Court to go to his own place in Mount Pleasant and serve ten to twelve years at home. At which, he strolled forth from the court-room and went where going best suited him — not, incidentally, to Mount Pleasant.

"The gang is broken up — fear-stricken — scattered. Let us exercise mercy," seemed to be the sentiment at the bottom of these moves.

"The gang" — "the Mane Nero" — the "Black Hand" — "the Society" of Mount Pleasant, differed not at all from hundreds of its kin scattered through the land to-day, in many States of the Union.

It began in a knot of a half-dozen immigrants too proud to work, dominated by one man of an already